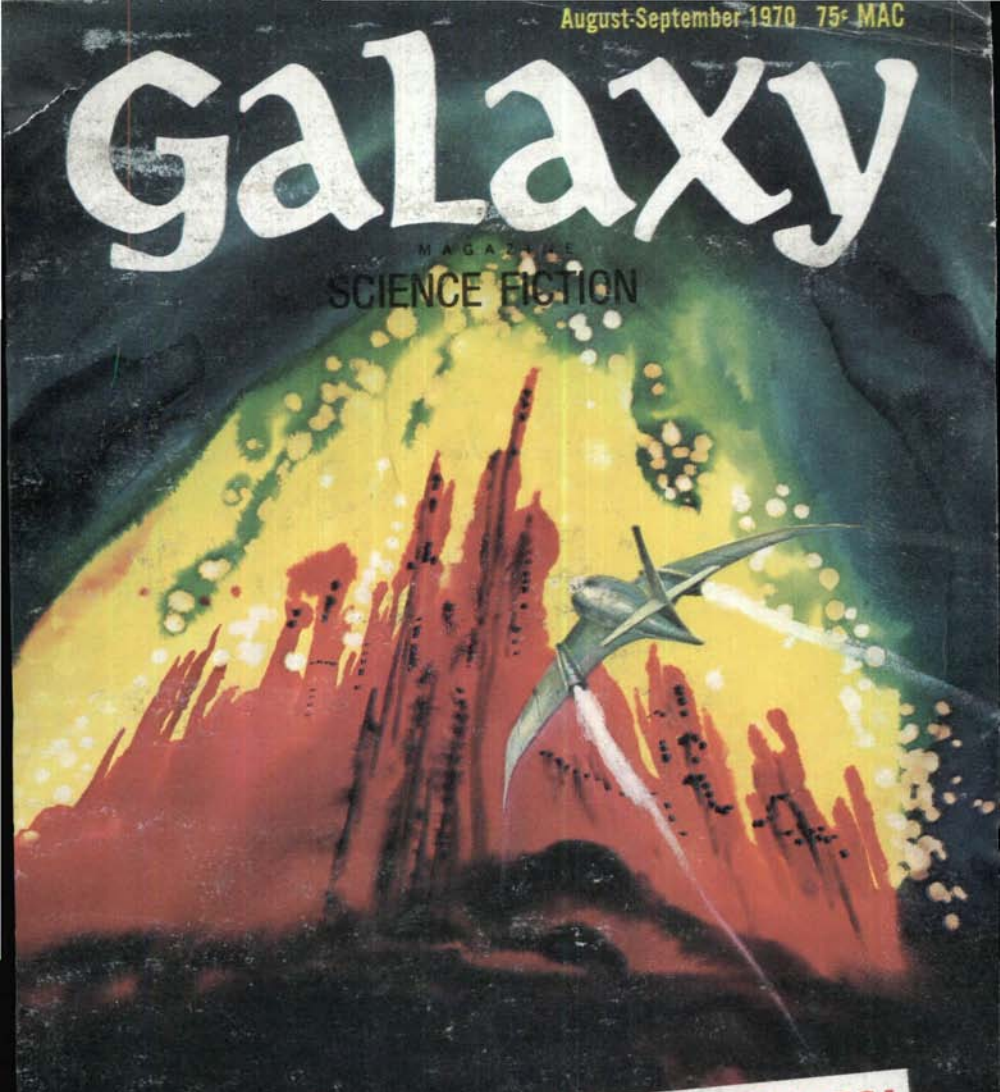
August-September 1970 75¢ MAC

GALAXY

MAGAZINE OF SCIENCE FICTION



LARGER THAN EVER—32 MORE PAGES!

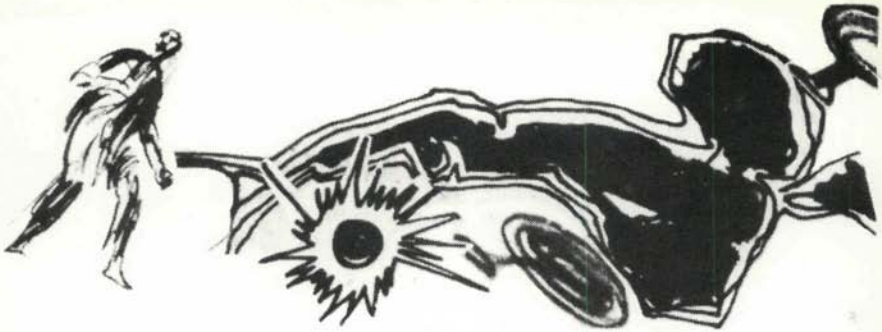
Moon Heat
ERNEST TAVES

About a Secret Crocodile
R. A. LAFFERTY

The Day After Judgment
a complete novel by
JAMES BLISH

Robert A. Heinlein • Sonya Dorman • Dannie Plachta • Algis Budrys

COPYRIGHT UNDER
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IT DOESN'T TAKE A GENIUS

to figure out how much you hate missing the best story of your favorite writer or the major part of a great novel. But we can't compute a formula to stock every newsstand in the country with enough copies of our popular magazines to satisfy every reader. So we sometimes miss you and you miss us — and that's a double tragedy.

BUT THERE'S AN ANSWER.
It doesn't take a genius to handle it, either. All it takes is a minute of your time, for which we want to repay you with a handsome saving over the newsstand price. Just fill in the coupon — or write the information on a piece of plain paper — and mail it to us. Then you'll be sure instead of sorry.

UNIVERSAL PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING CORPORATION
235 EAST FORTY-FIFTH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

Hurry and enter my subscription to GALAXY and WORLDS OF IF at your special combination rate. I enclose my check or money order for:

☐ 6 issues of each $7.50 ☐ 12 issues of each $14.50 ☐ 18 issues of each $21.50

Name.....

Address.....

City & State..... Zip Code.....

Prices outside the Western Hemisphere add $1.00 per 12 issues for postage

Please check whether ☐ new or ☐ renewal

LICENSED TO MYCROFT
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Galaxy
SCIENCE FICTION

MAGAZINE

ALL STORIES NEW

Galaxy is published in French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. The U. S. Edition is published in Braille and Living Tape.

GALAXY
August-September, 1970 **Vol. 30, No. 5**

COMPLETE NOVEL
THE DAY AFTER JUDGMENT 4
James Blish

SERIAL (Part II)
I WILL FEAR NO EVIL 96
Robert A. Heinlein

SHORT STORIES
ABOUT A SECRET CROCODILE 69
R.A. Lafferty
POWER PLAY 81
Dannie Plachta
MOON HEAT..... 84
Ernest Taves

VERSE
COORDINATES 80
Sonya Dorman

FEATURES
EDITOR'S PAGE 2
GALAXY BOOKSHELF 185
Algis Budrys

Cover by GAUGHAN, suggested by THE DAY AFTER JUDGMENT

EJLER JAKOBSSON
Editor
DONALD H. MENZEL
Science Editor
LESTER DEL REY
Feature Editor
JUDY-LYNN BENJAMIN
Managing Editor
FRANC L. ROGGERI
Art Director
JACK GAUGHAN
Associate Art Director
LAURENCE MURPHY
Circulation Director

•

ARNOLD E. ABRAMSON
Publisher
BERNARD WILLIAMS
Associate Publisher

GALAXY MAGAZINE is published bimonthly by Universal Publishing & Distributing Corporation, Arnold E. Abramson, President. Main offices: 235 East 45 Street, New York, N.Y. 10017. 75¢ per copy. 12-issue subscription: $7.50 in the United States, elsewhere $8.50. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1970 by Universal Publishing & Distributing Corporation under International, Universal and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. All rights reserved. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fiction and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coincidental. Title registered U.S. Patent Office. Printed in U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE RARIES

The Raries are in many respects remarkably human. In appearance, size, occupation, intelligence and standard behavior they are indistinguishable from people. Their complexions range the gamut of human coloration and they do not vote as a block. The one thing that sets them apart is that they're just a little better.

The Raries began to develop their own planetary organization eleven years ago—in 1959. Its founder is Dr. Leonard M. Eisenberg, who is also the president of the Associated Health Foundation. It is called the National Rare Blood Club and its address is 164 Fifth Avenue, New York City 10010, tel. 212-CH 3-8037. Its relevance to readers of this particular issue of *Galaxy* is that Mr. Robert A. Heinlein, whose breakthrough novel, *I Will Fear No Evil*, is currently being serialized here, is a Rarie—and so may you be. Should you qualify, you could not possibly find yourself in better company.

The Rare Blood Club is pervasively featured in the novel—and, incidentally, should you run into any scuttlebutt that the serialization is in any way condensed or altered pay no attention. The opportunity of presenting this remarkable novel exactly as Mr. Heinlein wrote it—plus Jack Gaughan's illustrations—ranks with the happiest professional experiences I've known. Mr. Heinlein's major characters in the novel all exemplify the life-giving generousness of Raries.

The Raries' Club is one of the most exclusive—only an estimated 25% of the population meets membership requirements, which have nothing to do with ethnics or socio-economic standards.

In this case blood will tell. If you're 18-65 and one of the .6% of the population with *AB Rh-Negative* blood; of the 1.5% with *B Rh-Negative*; the 3.4% with *AB Rh-Positive*; the 6.15% with *A Rh-Negative*; the 6.75% with *O Rh-Negative*; the 8.5% with *B Rh-Positive*—and in addition are ready to drop whatever you're doing, wherever you may be, to save the life of someone you do not know, who may belong to any ethnic or social class and may not even be a registered member of the Club—or of Raries—you may apply for membership.

Do so. The life your blood donation will save may one day save yours. Or that of a member of your family. Or that of a perfect stranger. At no cost other than the hospital administration charge.

Raries are remarkable. Many have traveled considerable distances by the fastest possible transportation at their own expense, leaving businesses dangling, to save a life. Waitresses have answered calls for donors without waiting for the tip. In 11 years 7,000 Raries have donated 10,000 pints of blood for no other reason than that they're Raries.

Love 'em. —JAKOBSSON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These great minds were Rosicrucians . . .

WHAT SECRET POWER DID THEY POSSESS?

Benjamin Franklin

Isaac Newton

Francis Bacon

Why were these men great?

How does anyone — man or woman — achieve greatness? Is it not by mastery of the powers within ourselves?

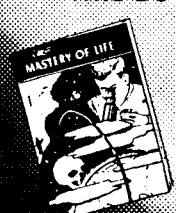
Know the mysterious world within you! Attune yourself to the wisdom of the ages! Grasp the inner power of your mind! Learn the secrets of a full and peaceful life!

Benjamin Franklin, statesman and inventor . . . Isaac Newton, discoverer of the Law of Gravitation . . . Francis Bacon, philosopher and scientist . . . like many other learned and great men and women . . . were Rosicrucians. The Rosicrucians (NOT a religious organization) have been in existence for centuries. Today, headquarters of the Rosicrucians send over seven million pieces of mail annually to all parts of the world.

The ROSICRUCIANS

San Jose (AMORC) California 95114, U.S.A.

THIS BOOK FREE!



Write for your FREE copy of "The Mastery of Life" — TODAY. No obligation. A nonprofit organization. Address: Scribe N.S.A.

SEND THIS COUPON

Scribe N.S.A.
The ROSICRUCIANS
(AMORC)
San Jose, California 95114, U.S.A.

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR ZIP CODE

Please send me the *free* book, *The Mastery of Life*, which explains how I may learn to use my faculties and powers of mind.

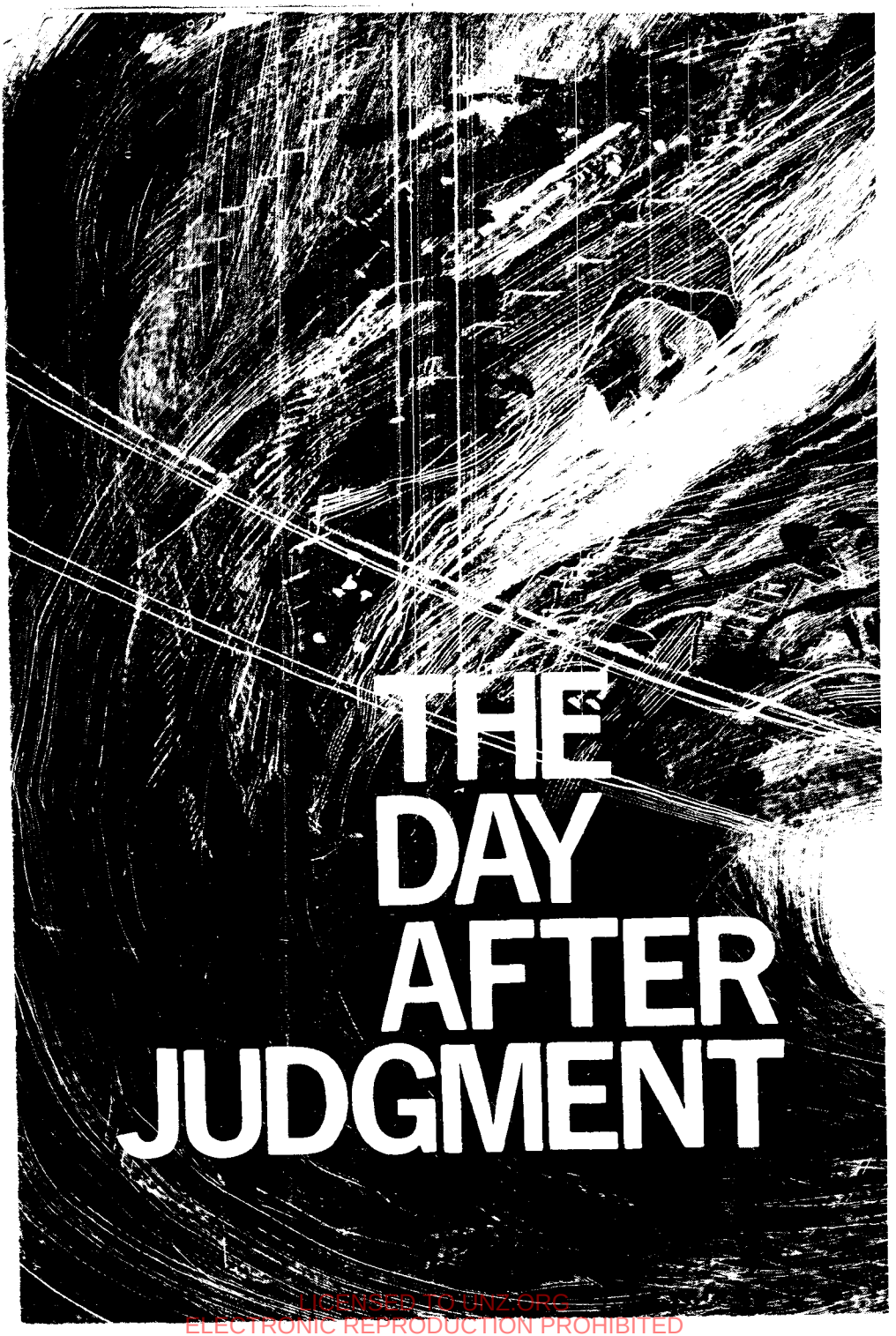
Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAMES BLISH

"Nobody can lick the United States," General McKnight said. "Not in the long run. . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE Fall of God put Theron Ware in a peculiarly unenviable position, though he was hardly alone. After all, he had caused it—insofar as an event so gigantic could be said to have had any cause but the First. And as a black magician he knew better than to expect any gratitude from the victor.

Nor, on the other hand, would it do him the slightest good to maintain that he had loosed the forty-eight suffragen demons upon the world only at the behest of a client. Hell was an incombustible Alexandrine library of such evasions—and besides, even had he had a perfect plea of innocence, there was no longer any such thing as justice anywhere. The Judger was dead.

"When the hell *is* he coming back?" Baines, the client, demanded suddenly, irritably. "This waiting is worse than getting it over with."

Father Domenico turned from the refectory window, which was now unglazed from the shock wave of the H-bombing of Rome. He had been looking down the cliff face, over the half-melted *pensioni*, shops and tenements of what had once been Positano, at the drained sea bed. When that tsunami did arrive it was going to be a record one; it might even reach all the way up here.

"You don't know what you're saying, Mister Baines," the white magician said. "From now on, nothing can be over with. We are on the brink of eternity."

"You know what I mean," Baines growled.

"Of course, but if I were you, I'd be grateful for the respite . . . It *is* odd that he hasn't come back yet. Dare we hope that something has after all interfered with him? Something—or some One?"

"He said God is dead."

"Yes, but he is the Father of Lies. What do you think, Doctor Ware?"

Ware did not reply. The personage they were talking about was of course not the Father of Lies, the ultimate Satan, but the subsidiary prince who had answered Ware's last summons—PUT SATANACHIA, sometimes called Baphomet, the Sabbath Goat. As for the question, Ware simply did not know the answer; it was now sullen full morning of the day after Armageddon, and the Goat had promised to come for the four of them promptly at dawn, in ironical obedience to the letter of Ware's loosing and sending; yet he was not here.

Baines looked around the spent conjuring room. "I wonder what he did with Hess?"

"Swallowed him," Ware said, "as you saw. And it served the fool right for stepping outside his circle."

"But did he really eat him?" Baines said. "Or was that, uh, just symbolical? Is Hess actually in Hell now?"

Ware refused to be drawn into the discussion, which he recognized at once as nothing but Baines' last little vestige of skepticism floundering about for an exit from its doom; but Fr. Domenico said, "The thing that called itself Screwtape let slip to Lewis that demons do eat souls. But one can hardly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suppose that that is the end. I expect we will shortly know a lot more about the matter than we wish."

Abstractedly he brushed from his robe a little more of the dust from his shattered crucifix. Ware watched him with ironic wonder. He really was staging a remarkable recovery; his God was dead, his Christ exploded as a myth, his soul assuredly as damned as that of Ware or Baines—and he could still manage to interest himself in semischolastic prattle. Well, Ware had always thought that white magic, these days as always, attracted only a low order of intellect, let alone insight.

But where was the Goat?

"I wonder where Mister Ginsberg went?" Father Domenico said, as if in parody of Ware's unspoken question. Again Ware only shrugged. He had for the moment quite forgotten Baines' male secretary; it was true that Ginsberg had shown some promise as an apprentice, but after all, he had wanted to learn the Ars Magica essentially as a means of supplying himself with mistresses, and even under normal circumstances his recent experience with Ware's assistant, Gretchen—who was in fact a succubus—had probably driven the desire out permanently. In any event, of what use would an apprentice be now?

Baines looked as startled as Ware felt at the question. "Jack?" he said. "I sent him to our rooms to pack."

"To pack?" Ware said. "You had some notion that you might get away?"

"I thought it highly unlikely," Baines said evenly, "but if the opportunity arose, I didn't mean to be caught unprepared."

"Where do you think you might go where the Goat couldn't find you?"

No reply was necessary. Ware felt through his sandals a slow shuddering of the tiled floor. As it grew more pronounced, it was joined by a faint but deep thunder in the air.

Fr. Domenico shuffled hastily back to the window, Baines close behind him. Unwillingly, Ware followed.

On the horizon a wall of foaming, cascading water was coming toward them, with preternatural slowness, across the deserted floor of the Tyrrhenian Sea. The water had all been drained away as one consequence of the Corinth earthquake of yesterday, which itself might or might not have been demonically created; Ware was not sure that it made much difference one way or the other. In any event, the tectonic imbalance was now, inexorably, in the process of righting itself.

The Goat remained unaccountably delayed . . . but the tsunami was on its way at last.

I

THE enemy, whoever he was, had obviously been long prepared to make a major attempt to reduce the Strategic Air Command's master missile-launching control site under Denver. In the first twenty minutes of the war he had dumped a whole stick of multiple hydrogen warheads on it. The city, of course,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had been utterly vaporized and a vast expanse of the plateau on which it had stood was now nothing but gullied, vitrified and radioactive granite; but the site had been well hardened and was more than a mile beneath the original surface. Everybody in it had been knocked down and temporarily deafened, there were bruises and scrapes and one concussion, some lights had gone out and a lot of dust had been raised despite the air-conditioning; in short, the damage would have been reported as "minimal" had there been anybody to report it to.

Who the enemy was occasioned some debate. General D. Willis McKnight, a Yellow Peril fan since his boyhood reading of *The American Weekly* in Chicago, favored the Chinese. Of his two chief scientists, one, the Prague-born Dr. Džejms Šatvje, the godfather of the selenium bomb, had been seeing Russians under his bed for almost as long

"*Nu*, why argue?" said Johann Buelg. As a RAND Corporation alumnus, he found nothing unthinkable, but he did not like to waste time speculating about facts. "We can always ask the computer —we must have enough input already for that. Not that it matters much, since we've already plastered the Russians *and* the Chinese pretty thoroughly."

"We already know the Chinese started it," Gen. McKnight said, wiping dust off his spectacles with his handkerchief. He was a small, narrow-chested Air Force Academy graduate from the class just after the cheating had been stopped, already nearly bald at forty-eight; naked, his face looked remarkably like that of a prawn. "They dropped a thirty-megatonner on Formosa, disguised as a test."

"It depends on what you mean by 'start,' " Buelg said. "That was already on Rung twenty-one, Level Four—local nuclear war. But still only Chinese against Chinese."

"But we were committed to them, right?" Šatvje said. "President Agnew told the UN, 'I am a Formosan.' "

"It doesn't matter worth a damn," Buelg said, with some irritation. It was his opinion, which he did not keep particularly private, that Šatvje, whatever his eminence as a physicist, in all other matters had a *goyische kopf*. He had encountered better heads on egg creams in his father's candy store. "The thing's escalated almost exponentially in the past eighteen hours or so. The question is, how far has it gone? If we're lucky, it's only up to Level Six, central war —maybe no farther than Rung thirty-four, constrained disarming attack."

"Do you call atomizing Denver restrained?" the general demanded.

"Maybe. They could have done for Denver with one warhead—instead they saturated it. That means they were shooting for us, not for the city proper. Our counter-strike couldn't be preventive, so it was one rung lower, which I hope to God they noticed."

"They took out Washington," Šatvje said, clasping his fat hands piously. He had been lean once, but becoming first a consultant on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Cabinet level, next a spokesman for massive retaliation, and finally a publicity-saint had appended a beer-belly to his brain-puffed forehead, so that he now looked like a caricature of a XIXth-century German philologist. Buelg himself was stocky and tended to run to lard but a terrible susceptibility to kidney stones had kept him on a reasonable diet.

"The Washington strike almost surely wasn't directed against civilians," Buelg said. "Naturally the leadership of the enemy is a prime military target. But, General, all this happened so quickly that I doubt that anybody in government had a chance to reach prepared shelters. You may now be effectively the President of whatever is left on the United States, which means that you could make new policies."

"True," McKnight said. "True, true."

"In which case we've got to know the facts the minute our lines to outside are restored. Among other things, if the escalation's gone all the way to spasm, in which case the planet will be uninhabitable. There'll be nobody and nothing left alive but people in hardened sites, like us, and the only policy we'll need for that will be a count of the canned beans."

"I think that needlessly pessimistic," Šatvje said, at last heaving himself up out of the chair into which he had struggled after getting up off the floor. It was not a very comfortable chair but the computer room—where they had all been when the strike had come—had not been designed for comfort. He put his thumbs under the lapels of his insignia-less advisor's uniform and frowned down upon them. "The Earth is a large planet, of its class; if we cannot reoccupy it, our descendants will be able to do so."

"After five thousand years?"

"You are assuming that carbon bombs were used. Dirty bombs of that kind are obsolescent. That is why I so strongly advocated the sulfur-decay chain; the selenium isotopes are chemically all strongly poisonous, but they have very short half-lives. A selenium bomb is essentially a *humane* bomb."

ŠATJVE was physically unable to pace, but he was beginning to stump back and forth. He was again playing back one of his popular magazine articles. Buelg began to twiddle his thumbs.

"It has sometimes occurred to me," Šatjve said, "that our discovery of how to release the nuclear energies was providential. Consider: Natural selection stopped for Man when he achieved control over his environment—and furthermore began to save the lives of all his weaklings and preserve their bad genes. Once natural selection has been halted the only remaining pressure upon the race to evolve is mutation. Artificial radioactivity and, indeed, even fallout itself, may be God's way of resuming the process of evolution for Man—perhaps toward some ultimate organism we cannot foresee, perhaps even toward some unitary mind which we will share with God, as Teilhardt de Chardin envisioned—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At this point, the general noticed the twiddling of Buelg's thumbs.

"Facts are what we need," he said. "I agree with you there, Buelg. But a good many of our lines to outside *were* cut, and there may have been some damage to the computer circuitry, too." He jerked his head toward the technicians who were scurrying around and up and down the face of RANDOMAC. "I've got them working on it. Naturally."

"I see that, but we'll need some sort of rational schedule of questions. Is the escalation still going on, presuming we haven't reached the insensate stage already? If it's over--or at least suspended somehow—is the enemy sane enough not to start it again? And then, what's the extent of the exterior damage? For that, we'll need a visual readout—I assume there are still some satellites up, but we'll want a closer look, if any local television survived.

"And if you're now the President, General, are you prepared to negotiate, if you've got any opposite numbers in the Soviet Union or the People's Republic?"

"There ought to be whole sets of such courses of action already programed into the computer," McKnight said, "according to what the actual situation is. Is the machine going to be useless to us for anything but gaming, now that we really need it? Or have you been misleading me again?"

"Of course I haven't been misleading you. I wouldn't play games with my own life included among the stakes. And there are indeed such alternative courses; I wrote most of them myself, though I didn't do the actual programing. But no program can encompass what a specific leader might decide to do. War gaming actual past battles—for example, rerunning Waterloo without allowing for Napoleon's piles or the heroism of the British squares—has produced 'predicted' outcomes completely at variance with history. Computers are rational; people aren't. Look at Agnew. That's why I asked you my question—which, by the way, you haven't yet answered."

McKnight pulled himself up and put his glasses back on.

"I," he said, "am prepared to negotiate. With anybody. Even Chinks."

II

ROME was no more, nor was Milan. Neither were London, Paris, Berlin, Bonn, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Riyadh, Stockholm and a score of lesser cities. But these were of no immediate concern. As the satellites showed, their deaths had expectably laid out long, cigar-shaped, overlapping paths of fallout to the east—the direction in which, thanks to the rotation of the Earth, the weather inevitably moved—and though these unfortunately lay across once-friendly terrain, they ended in enemy country. Similarly, the heavy toll in the U.S.S.R. had sown its seed across Siberia and China; that in China across Japan, Korea and Taiwan; and the death of Tokyo was poisoning only a swath of the Pacific

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(although, later, some worry would have to be devoted to the fish). Honolulu somehow had been spared, so that no burden of direct, heavy-nuclei fallout would reach the west coast of the United States.

This was fortunate, for Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle and Spokane had all been hit, as had Denver, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Chicago, New Orleans, Cleveland, Detroit and Dallas. Under the circumstances it really hardly mattered that Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, Syracuse, Boston, Toronto, Baltimore and Washington had all also gotten it, for even without the bombs, the eastern third of the continental United States would have been uninhabitable in its entirety for at least fifteen years to come. At the moment, in any event, it consisted of a single vast forest fire through which, from the satellites, the slag pits of the bombed cities were invisible except as high spots in the radiation contours. The northwest was in much the same shape, although the west coast in general had taken far fewer missiles. Indeed, the sky all over the world was black with smoke, for the forests of Europe and northern Asia were burning, too. Out of the pall, more death fell, gently, invisibly, inexorably.

All this, of course, came from the computer analysis. Though there were television cameras in the satellites, even on a clear day you could hardly have told from visual sightings, from that height —or from photographs, for that matter—whether or not there was intelligent life on Earth. The view over Africa, South America, Australia and the American southwest was better, but of no strategic or logistic interest.

Of the television cameras on the Earth's surface, most of the surviving ones were in areas where nothing seemed to have happened at all, although in towns the streets were deserted and the very few people glimpsed briefly on the screen looked haunted. The views from near the bombed areas were fragmentary, traveling, scarred by rasters, aflicker with electronic snow—a procession of unconnected images, like scenes from an early Surrealist film, where one could not tell whether the director was trying to portray a story or only a state of mind.

Here stood a single telephone pole, completely charred; here was a whole row of them, snapped off at ground level but still linked in death by their wires. Here was a desert of collapsed masonry, in the midst of which stood a reinforced-concrete smoke stack, undamaged except that its surface was etched by heat and by the sand-blasting of debris carried by a high wind. Here buildings all leaned sharply in a single direction, as if struck, like the chimney, by some hurricane of terrific proportions; here was what had been a group of manufacturing buildings, denuded of roofing and siding, nothing but twisted frames. Here a row of wrecked automobiles, neatly parked, burned in unison; here a gas holder, ruptured and collapsed, had burned out hours ago.

Here was a side of a reinforced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concrete building, windowless, cracked and buckled slightly inward where a shock wave had struck it. Once it had been painted gray or some dark color, but all the paint had blistered and scaled and blown away in a second, except where a man had been standing nearby; there the paint remained, a shadow with no one to cast it.

That vaporized man had been one of the lucky. Here stood another who had been in a cooler circle: evidently he had looked up at a fireball, for his eyes were only holes; he stood in a half crouch, holding his arms out from his sides like a penguin and, instead of skin, his naked body was covered with a charred fell which was cracked in places, oozing blood and pus. Here a filthy, tattered mob clambered along a road almost completely covered with rubble, howling with horror—though there was no sound with this scene—led by a hairless woman pushing a flaming babycarriage. Here a man who seemed to have had his back flayed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by flying glass worked patiently with a bent snow shovel at the edge of an immense mound of broken brick; by the shape of its margins, it might once have been a large house.

There was more.

Šatjve uttered a long, complex, growling sentence of hatred. It was entirely in Czech, but its content was nevertheless not beyond all conjecture. Buelg shrugged again and turned away from the TV screen.

"Pretty fearful," he said. "But on the whole, not nearly as much destruction as we might have expected. It's certainly gone no higher than Rung thirty-four. On the other hand, it doesn't seem to fit any of the escalation frames at all well. Maybe it makes some sort of military or strategic sense—but if it does I'm at a loss to know what it is. General?"

"Senseless," McKnight said. "Outright senseless. Nobody's been hurt in any decisive way. And yet the action seems to be over."

"That was my impression,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Buelg agreed. "There seems to be some missing factor. We're going to have to ask the computer to scan for an anomaly. Luckily it's likely to be a big one—but since I can't tell the machine what kind of anomaly to look for, it's going to cost us some time."

"How much time?" McKnight said, running a finger around the inside of his collar. "If the Chinks start up on us again—"

"It may be as much as an hour, after I formulate the question and Chief Hay programs it, which will take, oh, say two hours at a minimum. But I don't think we need to worry about the Chinese; according to our data, that opening Taiwan bomb was the biggest one they used, so it was probably the biggest one they had. As for anyone else, well, you just finished saying yourself that somehow everything's now stopped short. We badly need to find out why."

"All right. Get on it, then."

THE two hours for programing, however, stretched to four; and then the computer ran for ninety minutes without producing anything at all. Chief Hay had thoughtfully forbidden the machine to reply DATA INSUFFICIENT, since new data were coming in at an increasing rate as communications with the outside improved; as a result, the computer was recycling the problem once every three or four seconds.

McKnight used the time to issue orders that repairs to the keep be made, stores assessed, order restored, and then settled down to a telecommunications search—again via the computer, but requiring only about two percent of its capacity—for any superiors who might have survived him. Buelg suspected that he really wanted to find some; he had the capacity to be a general officer, but would find it most uncomfortable to be a president, even over so abruptly simplified a population and economy—and foreign policy, for that matter—as the TV screen had shown now existed outside. Ordering junior officers to order non commissioned officers to order rankers to replace broken fluorescent bulbs was the type of thing he didn't mind doing on his own, but for ordering them to arm missiles and aim them—or put a state under martial law—he much preferred to be acting upon higher authority.

As for Buelg's own preference, he rather hoped that McKnight wouldn't be able to find any such person. The United States under a McKnight regime wouldn't be run very imaginatively or even flexibly, but on the other hand it would be unlikely to be a tyranny. Besides, McKnight was quite dependent upon his civilian experts, and hence would be easy to manage. Of course, that meant that something would have to be done about Satvje.

The computer rang its bell and began to print out its analysis. Buelg read it with intense concentration and, after the first fold, utter incredulity. When it was all out of the printer, he tore it off, tossed it onto the desk and beckoned to Chief Hay.

"Run the question again."

Hay turned to the input key-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

board. It took him ten minutes to retype the program; the question had been in the normal order of things too specialized to tape. Two and a half seconds after he had finished the machine chimed and the long thin slabs of metal began to rise against the paper. The printing-out process never failed to remind Buelg of a player piano running in reverse, converting notes into punches instead of the other way around, except, of course, that what one got here was not punches but lines of type. But he saw almost at once that the analysis itself was going to be the same.

At the same time he became aware that Šatvje was standing just behind him.

"About time," the Czech said. "Let's have a look."

"There's nothing to see yet."

"What do you mean, there's nothing to see? It's printing, isn't it? And you've already got another copy out on the bench. The general should have been notified immediately."

He picked up the long, wide accordian-fold of paper with its sprocket-punched edges and began to read it. There was nothing Buelg could do to prevent him.

"The machine's printing nonsense, that's what I mean, and I didn't propose to distract the general with a lot of garbage. The bombing must have jarred something loose."

Hay turned from the keyboard. "I ran a test program through promptly after the attack, Doctor Buelg. The computer was functioning perfectly then."

"Well, clearly it isn't now. Run

Ballantine Books

WITH THE June sales conference over (at which the entire Fall list is presented), the dog days of summer are here to confront us with various crises ignored in the excitement of preparing for that semi-annual holocaust. Everyone is feeling dragged out—in a triumphant sort of way—when the call comes for copy for what we laughingly call an ad. Well okay, it just so happens that our July list is one of the best we've had this year. First and foremost, Bob Silverberg has edited a volume titled, very accurately, GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF SCIENCE FICTION. And the roster of writers includes Bertram Chandler, Kornbluth, Jack Vance, Charles DeVet and Katherine MacLean, Wyman Guin and Roger Zelazny. Really topflight, if we do say so ourselves.

•

THIS MONTH sees also two Adult Fantasies—one, by George Meredith, will be known to some. Surely THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT is dearly loved by a small, select group. Such wily sensuality and humor, such richness of imagery—as Francis Meynell says, "More than a hundred thousand words of coruscating fantasy, a dizzy riot of magic . . ." Perhaps now a larger select group will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enjoy. Incidentally, it nas a smashing cover from Ray Cruz.

•

AND THE second fantasy is a truly remarkable find from Lin Carter, a magnificent work originally titled **The Virgin and the Swine** (which may well be why the book has been a well-kept secret for some thirty years). We have re-titled it, with much greater accuracy and appropriateness, THE ISLAND OF THE MIGHTY. It is by a delightful lady named Evangeline Walton, and the subject matter is based in early Welsh mythology when bloodlines were established by maternal continuity since only the mother of a child could be known for sure. Incest was the accepted way of keeping things in the family, marriage not yet invented since no one believed one could so clearly fly in the face of nature without dire results. At the same time, there were men and women of vast powers, disciplined and educated in sorcery and magic, who ruled the land. The hero and herione of the tale, if indeed they can be so called, are two such. A brother and sister, deeply committed to one another, although she has refused to bear him a nephew. She is, in fact, a bitch of the first water, unforgivably selfish, savage in her hatreds. Her brother, at first a reckless young man, emerges as figure of truly heroic stature in a book that moves steadily to a towering climax. Absolutely do not miss this one. BB

your test program again, find out where the trouble lies and let us know how long it will take to repair it. If we can't trust the computer we're out of business for sure."

Hay got to work. Šatvje put the down readout.

"What's nonsense about this?"

"It's utterly impossible, that's all. There hasn't been time. With any sort of engineering training, you'd know that yourself. And it makes no military or political sense, either."

"I think we should let the general be the judge of that."

Picking up the bulky strip again, Šatvje carried it off toward the general's office, a certain subtle triumph in his gait, like the school trusty bearing the evidence of petty theft to the head master. Buelg followed, inwardly raging, and not only at the waste motion. Šatvje would, of course, tell McKnight that Buelg had been holding back on reporting the analysis; all Buelg could do now, until the machine was repaired, was to be sure to be there to explain why, and the posture was much too purely defensive for his liking. It was a damn shame that he had ever taught Šatvje to read a printout, but once they had been thrown together on this job, he had had no choice in the matter. McKnight had been as suspicious as a Sealyham of both of them, anyhow, at the beginning. Šatvje, after all, had come from a country which had long been Communist, and had had to explain that his ancestry was French, his name only a Serbo-Croat transliteration back from the Cyrillic of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Chatvieux"; while Security had unfortunately confused Buelg with Johann Gottfried Jülg, a forgotten nineteenth-century translator of *Ardshi Bordschi Khan*, the *Siddhi Kur*, the *Skaskas* and other Russian folk tales, so that Buelg, even more demeaningly, had had to admit that his name was actually a Yiddish version of a German word for a leather bucket. Under McKnight's eye, the two still possibly suspect civilians had to cooperate or be downgraded into some unremunerative university post. Buelg supposed that Šatvje had enjoyed it as little as he had, but he didn't care an iota about what Šatvje did or didn't enjoy. Damn the man.

AS FOR the document itself, it was no masterpiece of analysis. The machine had simply at last recognized an anomaly in a late-coming piece of new data. It was the interpretation that made Buelg suspect that the gadget had malfunctioned; unlike Šatvje, he had had enough experience of computers at RAND to know that if they were not allowed enough warm-up time, or had been improperly cleared of a previous program, they could produce remarkably paranoid fantasies.

Translated from the Fortran, the document said that the United States had not only been hit by missiles, but also deeply invaded. This conclusion had been drawn from a satellite sighting of something in Death Valley, not there yesterday, which was not natural, and whose size, shape and energy output suggested an enormous fortress.

"Which is just plain idiotic," Buelg added, after the political backing and filling in McKnight's office had been gone through, to nobody's final advantage. "On any count you care to name. The air drops required to get the materials in there, or the sea landings plus overland movements, couldn't have gone undetected. Then, strategically it's insane: the building of targets like fortresses should have become obsolete with the invention of the cannon—and the airplane made them absurd. Locating such a thing in Death Valley means that it dominates nothing but utterly worthless territory, at the price of insuperable supply problems—right from the start it's in a state of siege by Nature alone. And as for running it up overnight—I ask you, General, could *we* have done that, even in peacetime and in the most favorable imaginable location? I say we couldn't—and that if we couldn't no human agency could."

McKnight picked up his phone and spoke briefly. Since it was a Hush-a-Phone, what he said was inaudible, but Buelg's guess about the call was promptly confirmed.

"Chief Hay says the machine is in perfect order and has produced a third analysis just like this one," he reported. "The problem now clearly is one of reconnaissance. (He pronounced the word correctly, which, amidst his flat California American, sounded almost affected.) Is there such a thing in Death Valley, or isn't there? For the satellite to be able to spot it at all it must be gigantic. From twenty-three thousand miles up, even a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

city the size of San Antonio is invisible unless you know exactly what you're looking for in advance."

Here, Buelg was aware, McKnight was speaking as an expert. Until he had been put in charge of SAC in Denver, almost all his career had been spent in various aspects of Air Information; even as a teenager, he had been a Civil Air Patrol cadet involved in search-and-rescue operations, which, between the mudslides and the brushfires, had been particularly extensive in the Los Angeles area in those days.

"I don't doubt that the satellite has spotted *something,*" Buelg said. "But what it probably sees is a hard-radiation locus—maybe thermally hot, too—rather than any optical object, let alone a construct. My guess is that it's nothing more than the impact site of a multiple warhead component that lost guidance, or was mis-aimed to begin with."

"Highly likely," McKnight admitted. "But why guess? The obvious first step is to send a low-level attack bomber over the site and get close-in photographs and spectra. A primitive installation such as you suggested earlier would be typically Chinese, and if so they won't have low-level radar. If, on the other hand, the plane gets shot down, that will tell us something about the enemy, too."

Buelg sighed inwardly. Trying to nudge McKnight out of his single channel was a frustrating operation. But maybe in this instance it wasn't really necessary; after all, the suggestion itself was sensible.

"All right," he said. "One plane seems like a small investment. We've got damn-all else left to lose now, anyhow."

III

NO ATTACK was made on the plane but there was, nevertheless, one casualty. Neither the photographer nor the flight engineer, both busy with their instruments, had actually seen much of the target, and the captain, for the same reason, had seen little more.

"Hell of a lot of turbulence," he said at the debriefing, which took place a thousand miles away, while the men under Denver watched intently. "And the target itself is one huge updraft, like New York used to be, only much worse."

But the navigator, once his job had been done, had had nothing to do but look out and he was in a state of shock. He was a swarthy young enlisted man from Chicago who looked as though he might have been recruited straight from a Mafiosa family, but he could say nothing now but a sentence which refused to get beyond its first word: "Dis—Dis—"

Once he had recovered from his shock they would be able to question him. But for the time being he was of no help.

The photographs, however, were very clear, except for the infrared-sensitive plates, which showed nothing intelligible to the eye at all. The installation was perfectly circular and surrounded by a moat which, impossibly for Death Valley, appeared to be filled with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

black but genuine water, from which a fog bank was constantly trying to rise, only to be dissipated in the bone-dry air. The construction itself was a broad wall, almost a circular city, a good fifteen miles in diameter. It was broken irregularly by towers and other structures, some of them looking remarkably like mosques. This shell glowed fiercely, like red-hot iron; and a spectrograph showed that this was what it was.

Inside, the ground was terraced, like a lunar crater. At ground level was a flat plain, dotted with tiny rectangular markings in no discernible pattern; these, too, the spectrograph said, were red-hot iron. What seemed to be another moat, blood-red and as broad as a river, encircled the next terrace at the foot of the cliff where it began and this, even more impossibly, was bordered by a dense circular forest. The forest was as broad as the river, but thinned eventually to a ring of what appeared to be the original sand, equally broad.

In a lunar crater, the foothills of the central peak would have begun about here; but in the pictures, instead, the terrain plunged into a colossal black pit. The river cut through the forest and the desert at one point and roared over the side in a vast waterwall, compounding the darkness with mist which the camera had been unable to penetrate.

"What was that you were saying about building a fortress overnight, Buelg?" the general said. "No human agency could?"

"No human agency was involved," Šatvje said in a hoarse whisper. He turned to the aide who had brought the pictures, an absurdly young lieutenant-colonel with a blond crewcut, white face and shaking hands. "Closeups?"

"Yes, Doctor. There was an automatic camera under the plane that took a film of the approach run. Here is one of the best shots."

The picture showed what appeared to be a towering gate in the best medieval style. Hundreds of shadowy figures crowded the barbican, of which three, just above the gateway itself, had been looking up at the plane and were shockingly clear. They looked like gigantic naked women, with ropy hair all awry, and the wide-staring eyes of insane rage.

"I thought so," Šatvje said.

"You recognize them?" Buelg asked incredulously.

"No, but I know their names. Alecto, Megaera and Tisiphone," Šatvje said. "And it's a good thing that there's at least one person among us with a European education. I presume that our *distrait* friend the navigator is a Catholic, which does just as well in this context. In any event, he was quite right: this is Dis, the fortress surrounding Nether Hell. I think we must now assume that all the rest of the Earth is contiguous with Upper Hell, not only in metaphor but in fact."

"It's a good thing," Buelg said acidly, "that there's at least one person among us with a good grip on his sanity. The last thing we need now is a relapse into superstition."

"If you blow up that photograph, I think you'll find that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hair on those women actually consists of live snakes. Isn't that so, Colonel?"

"Well—Doctor, it—it certainly looks like it."

"Of course. Those are the Furies who guard the gates of Dis. They are the keepers of the Gorgon Medusa, which, thank God, isn't in the picture. The moat is the River Styx; the first terrace inside contains the burning tombs of the Heresiarchs, and on the next you have the River Phlegethon, the Wood of the Suicides, and the Abominable Sand. A rain of fire is supposed to fall continually on the sand, but I suppose that's invisible in Death Valley sunlight, or maybe even superfluous. We can't see what's down below, but presumably that, too, will be exactly as Dante described it. The crowd along the barbican is made up of demons—not so, Colonel?"

"Sir—we can't tell what they are. We were wondering if they were, well, Martians or something. Everyone is a different shape."

Buelg felt his back hairs stirring. "I refuse to believe this nonsense," he said. "Šatvje is interpreting it from his damned obsolete education. Even Martians would make more sense."

"What are the facts about this Dante?" McKnight said.

"An Italian poet, of about the Thirteenth Century—"

"Early Fourteenth," Šatvje said. "And not just any poet. He had a vision of Hell and Heaven which became the greatest peom ever written— the *Divine Comedy.* What we see in those pictures exactly corresponds to the description in Cantos Eight through Eleven of it."

"Buelg, see if you can locate a copy of the book and have it read to the computer. First we need to know if the correspondence is all that exact. If it is, we'll need an analysis of what it means."

"The computer probably already has the book," Buelg said. "The whole Library of Congress, plus all our recreational library, is on microfilm inside it, we didn't have room for books per se down here. All we need to do is tell Chief Hay to make it part of the problem. But I still think it's damn nonsense."

"What we want," McKnight said, "is the computer's opinion. Yours has already been shown to be somewhat less reliable."

"And while you're at it," Šatvje said, perhaps a shade less smugly than Buelg might have expected, "have Chief Hay make a part of the problem everything in the library on demonology. We're going to need it."

Throwing up his hands, Buelg left the office. In the country of the mad . . . nobody retains his sanity.

Only a few moments were needed for the computer to produce its report.

THE ANCIENT TEXTS AND FICTIONS NOW ADMITTED TO THE PROBLEM DISAGREE WITH EACH OTHER. HOWEVER, THE NEW FACTUAL DATA MAKE EXACT MATCHES WITH A NUMBER OF THEM, AND APPROXIMATE MATCHES WITH THE MAJORITY OF THEM. THE ASSUMP-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TION THAT THE CONSTRUCT IN DEATH VALLY IS RUSSIAN, CHINESE OR OTHERWISE OF HUMAN ORIGIN IS OF THE LOWEST ORDER OF PROBABILITY AND MAY BE DISCOUNTED. THE INTERPLANETARY HYPOTHESIS IS OF SLIGHTLY HIGHER PROBABILITY, AN INVASION FROM VENUS BEING COMPATIBLE WITH A FEW OF THE FACTUAL DATA, SUCH AS THE IMMENSE HEAT AND ABERRANT LIFE-FORMS OF THE DEATH VALLEY INSTALLATION, BUT IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH MOST ARCHITECTURAL AND OTHER HISTORICAL DETAILS IN THE DATA, AS WELL AS WITH THE LEVEL OF TECHNOLOGY INDICATED THE PROBABILITY THAT THE DEATH VALLEY INSTALLATION IS THE CITY OF DIS AND THAT ITS INTERNAL AREA IS NEITHER HELL IS 0.1 WITHIN A 5%LEVEL OF CONFIDANCE AND THEREFORE MUST BE ADMITTED. AS A FIRST DERIVATIVE, THE PROBABILITY THAT THE WAR JUST CONCLUDED WAS ARMAGEDDON IS 0.01 WITHIN THE SAME CONFIDANCE LEVEL. AS A SECOND DERIVATIVE, THE PROBABILITY THAT THE FORCES OF GOD HAVE LOST THE WAR AND THAT THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH IS NOW CONFLUENT WITH UPPER HELL IS 0.001 WITHIN THE SAME CONFIDANCE LEVEL.

"WELL, that clarifies the situation considerably," McKnight said. "It's just as well we asked."

"But—my God! It simply can't be true," Buelg said desperately. "All right, maybe the computer is functioning properly, but it has no intelligence and, above all, no judgment. What it's putting out now is just a natural consequence of letting all that medieval superstition into the problem."

McKnight turned his shrimp's eyes toward Buelg. "You've seen the pictures," he said. "They didn't come out of the computer, did they? Or out of the old books? I think we'd better stop kicking against the pricks and start figuring out what we're going to do. We've still got the United States to think of. Doctor Šatvje, have you any suggestions?"

That was a bad sign. McKnight never used honorifics except to indicate, by inversion, which of the two of them had incurred his displeasure—not that Buelg had been in any doubt about that, already.

"I'm still in a good deal of doubt," Šatvje said modestly. "To begin with, if this had been Armageddon, we all ought to have been called to judgment by now; and there was certainly nothing in the prophecies that allowed for an encampment of victorious demons on the surface of the Earth. If the computer is completely right, then either God is dead as Nietzsche said or, as the jokes go, He is alive but doesn't want to get involved. In either case I think we would be well advised not to draw attention to ourselves. We can do nothing against supernatural powers; and if He *is* still alive, the battle may not be over. We are, I hope, safely hidden here and we would be ill advised to be caught in the middle."

"Now there you're dead wrong," Buelg said with energy. "Let's suppose for a minute that this fantasy represents the true state of affairs—in other words.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that demons have turned out to be real and are out there in Death Valley—"

"I'm not too sure what would be meant by 'real' in this context," Šatvje said. "They are apparent, true enough; but they certainly don't belong to the same order of reality as—"

"That's a question we can't afford to debate," Buelg said. He knew very well that the issue Šatvje was raising was a valid one—he was himself a fairly thorough-going Logical Positivist. But it would only confuse McKnight and there were brownie points to be made in keeping things clear-cut, whether they *were* clear-cut or not. "Look. If demons are real, then they occupy space/time in the real universe. That means that they exist inside some energy system in that universe and are maintained by it. All right, they can walk on red-hot iron and live comfortably in Death Valley; that's not inherently more supernatural than the existence of bacteria in the boiling waters of volcanic springs. It's an adaptation. Very well, then we can find out what that energy system is. We can analyze how it works. And once we know that, we can attack it."

"Now that's more like it," McKnight said.

"Pardon me, but I think we should proceed with the most extreme caution," Šatvje said. "Unless one has been raised in this tradition, one is not likely to think of all the implications. I myself am quite out of practice at it."

"Damn your education," Buelg said. But it was all coming back to him: The boundaryless ghetto along Nostrand Avenue; the fur-hatted, fur-faced, maxi-skirted Hassidim walking in pairs under the scaling elm saplings of Grand Central Parkway; the terror of riding the subway among the juvenile gangs under the eternal skullcap; the endless hairsplitting over the Talmudic and Midrashic creation myths for hour upon stuffy hour in *Schule*; the women slaving over their duplicate sets of dishes, in the peculiar smell of a kosher household, so close to being a stench compared to all other American smells, supporting their drone scholars; his mother's pride that Hansli, too, was plainly destined by God's will to become a holy man; and, when he had discovered instead the glories and rigors of the physical universe, that light and airy escape from fur hats and the smell of gefülte fish and the loving, worn women, the terror of the wrath of the jealous God. But all that was many years ago; it could not come back. He would not have it back.

"What are you talking about?" McKnight said. "Are we going to do something—and if so, what? Get to the point."

"My point," Šatvje said, "is that if all this—demonology—is, well, valid, or I suppose one should say true, then the whole Christian mythos is true, though it is not coming out in precisely the way it was prophesied. That being the case, then there are such things as immortal souls, or perhaps I should say, we may well have immortal souls, and we ought to take them into consider-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ation before we do anything rash."

BUELG saw the light—and with a great sense of relief; the Christian mythos had nothing to do with him, not personally, that is. He had no objection to it as an exercise in theory, a form of non-zero-sum game.

"If that's the case, I don't think there's any question of our being caught in the middle," he said. "We're required by the rules to come down on one side or the other."

"That's true, by God," McKnight said. "And after all, we're on the right side. We didn't start this war—the Chinks did."

"Right, right," Buelg said. "We're entitled to self-defense. And for my part, no matter what happens in the next world—about which we have no data—as long as I'm still in this one, I'm not prepared to regard *anything* as final. This may be a metaphysical war after all, but we still seem to live in some sort of secular universe. The universe of discourse has been enlarged but it hasn't been canceled. I say, let's learn more."

"Yes," McKnight said, "but how? That's what I keep asking, and I don't get anything back from either of you but a philosophical discussion. What do you propose that we *do?*"

"Have we got any missiles left?"

"We've still got maybe a dozen five- to ten-megatonners left and, of course, Old Mombi."

"Buelg, you madman, are you proposing for one instant—"

"Shut up for a minute and let me think." Old Mombi was Denver's doomsday machine, a complex carrier containing five one-hundred-megaton warheads, one of which was aimed to make even the moon uninhabitable; it was a post-spasm weapon that the present situation certainly did not call for—best to hold it in reserve. "I think what we ought to do is to lob one of the small jobs onto the Death Valley encampment. I don't really think it'll do much harm, maybe not any, but it might produce some information. We can fly a drone plane through the cloud as it goes up, and take off radiological, chemical, any other kinds of readings that the computer can come up with. These demons have obtruded themselves into the real world and the very fact that we can see them and photograph them shows that they share some of its characteristics now. Let's see how they behave under something a good deal hotter than red-hot iron. Suppose they do nothing more than sweat a little? We can analyse even that!"

"And suppose they trace the missile back to here?" Satvje said; but by his expression, Buelg knew that Satvje knew that it was a last-ditch argument.

"Then we're sunk, I suppose. But look at the architecture of that encampment; does that suggest to you that they've been in contact with real warfare since back in the Fourteenth Century? No doubt they have all kinds of supernatural powers but they've got a lot to learn about the natural ones! Maybe a decent adversary is what they've been lacking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all along—and if Armageddon has ended in a stand-off, a little action on the side of our Maker wouldn't be amiss. If He's still with us and actively interested, any *in*action on our parts would probably be viewed very gravely indeed if He wins after all. And if He's not with us any longer, then we'll have to help ourselves, as the proverb says."

"That's the stuff to give the troops," McKnight said. "It is so ordered."

Buelg nodded and left the office to search out Chief Hay. On the whole, he felt, he had made a nice recovery.

IV

POSITANO had been washed away, but the remains of Theron Ware's palazzo still stood above the scoured cliffside, like some post-Roman ruin. The ceiling had fallen in, the fluted pink tiles smashing Ware's glassware and burying the dim chalked diagrams of last night's conjuration on the refectory floor in a litter of straw and potsherds, mounds of which collapsed now and then to send streamers of choking dust up to meet the gently radioactive April rain.

Ware sat on the heaped remains of his altar within the tumbled walls, under the uncertain sky. His feelings were so complex that he could not have begun to explain them, even to himself; after many years' schooling in the rigorous non-emotions of Ceremonial Magic, it was a novelty to him to have any feelings at all but those of the thirst for knowledge; now he would have to re-learn those sensations, for his lovely book of acquisitions, upon which he had spent his soul and so much else, was buried under tons of tsunamic mud.

In a way, he thought tentatively, he felt free. After the shock of the seaquake had passed and all but an occasional tile had stopped falling he had struggled out of the rubble to the door and thence to the head of the stairway which led down to his bedroom, only to see nothing but mud three stone steps down, mud wrinkling and settling as the sea water gradually seeped out from under it. Somewhere down under there his book of new knowledge was beginning the aeon-long route to becoming an unreadable fossil. Well then; so much for his life. Almost it seemed to him then that he might begin again, that he was nameless, a *tabula rosa*, all false starts wiped out, all dead knowledge ready to be rejected or revivified. It was given to few men to live through something so cleansing as a total disaster.

But then he realized that this, too, was only an illusion. His past was there, ineluctably, in his commitments. He was still waiting for the return of the Sabbath Goat. He closed the door to the stairwell and the fossilized ripples of the mud and, blowing reflectively into his white mustache, went back into the refectory.

Father Domenico had earlier tired—it could not exactly be said that he had lost patience—of both the waiting and the fruitless de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bates over when or whether they would be come for, and had decided to attempt traveling South to see what and who remained of Monte Albano, the college of white magicians which had been his home grounds. Baines was still here, trying to raise some news on the little transistor radio to which only yesterday he had listened so gluttonously, as it gave accounts of the black Easter which Ware had raised up at his commission, and whose consequences now eddied away from them around the whole tortured globe. Now, however, it was producing nothing but bands of static and an occasional very distant voice in an unknown tongue.

With him now was Jack Ginsberg, dressed to the nines as usual, and in consequence looking by far the most bedraggled of the three. At Ware's entrance, Baines tossed the radio to his secretary and crossed toward the magician.

"Find out anything?"

"Nothing at all. As you can see for yourself, the sea is subsiding. It is obvious that Positano has been spared any further destruction—for the moment. As for why, we know no more than we did before."

"You can still work magic, can't you?"

"I don't appear to have been deprived of my memory," Ware said. "I've no doubt I can still *do* magic if I can get at my equipment under this mess—but whether I can work it is another matter. The conditions of reference have changed drastically and I have no idea how far or in what areas."

"Well, you could at least call up a demon and see if he could give us any information. There doesn't appear to be anyone else to ask."

"I see that I'll have to put the matter more bluntly. I am totally opposed to performing any more magic at this time, Doctor Baines. I see that you have again failed to think the situation through. The terms under which I was able to call upon demons no longer apply—I am no longer able to do anything for them, they must now own a substantial part of the world. If I were to call at this juncture probably no one would answer—and it might be better if nobody did, since I would have no way of controlling him. They are composed almost entirely of hatred for every unFallen creature, and every creature with the potentialty to be redeemed, but there is no one they hate more than a useless tool."

"Well, it seems to me that we may neither of us be totally useless even now," Baines declared. "You say the demons now own a substantial part of the world, but it's also perfectly evident that they don't own it all yet. Otherwise the Goat would have come back when he said he would. And we'd be in Hell."

"Hell has a great many circles. We may well be on the margins of the first right now—in the Vestibule of the Futile."

"We'd be in a good deal deeper if the demons were in total control, or if judgment had already been passed on us," Baines said.

"You are entirely right about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that, to be sure," Ware said, somewhat surprised. "But after all, from their point of view there is no hurry. In the past we might have saved ourselves by a last-minute act of contrition. Now, however, there is no longer any God to appeal to. They can wait and take us at their leisure."

"There I'm inclined to agree with Father Domenico. We don't know that for sure; we were told so only by the Goat. I admit that the other evidence all points in the same direction, but all the same, he could have been lying."

WARE thought about it. The argument from circumstances did not of course impress him—no doubt the circumstances were horrible beyond the capacity of any human soul to react to them—but they were certainly not beyond the range of human imagination. They were more or less the standard consequences of World War III, a war which Baines himself had been actively engaged in engineering some time before he had discovered his interest in black magic. Theologically they were also standard: a new but essentially unchanged version of the Problem of Evil, the centuries-old question of why a good and merciful God should allow so much pain and terror to be inflicted upon the innocent. The parameters had been filled in a somewhat different way, but the fundamental equation was the same as it had always been.

Nevertheless, the munitions maker was quite right—as Father Domenico had been earlier—to insist that they had no reliable information upon the most fundamental question of all.

Ware said slowly; "I'm reluctant to admit any hope at all at this juncture. On the other hand it has been said that to despair of God is the ultimate sin. What precisely do you have in mind?"

"Nothing specific yet. But suppose for the sake of argument that the demons are still under some sort of restrictions—I don't see any point in trying to imagine what they might be—and that the battle consequently isn't really over yet. If that's the case, it's quite possible that they could still use some help. Considering how far they've managed to get already, there doesn't seem to be much doubt about their winning in the end—and it's been my observation that it's generally a good idea to be on the winning side."

"It is folly to think that the triumph of evil could ever be a winning side, in the sense of anyone's gaining anything by it. Without good to oppose it, evil is simply meaningless. That isn't at all what I thought you had in mind. It is, instead, the last step in despairing of God—it's worse than Manicheanism, it is Satanism pure and simple. I once controlled devils but I never worshiped them, and I don't plan to begin now. Besides—"

Abruptly, the radio produced a tearing squeal and then began to mutter urgently in German. Ware could hear the voice well enough to register that the speaker had a heavy Swiss accent but not well enough to make out the sense. He and Baines both took a crunching

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

step toward Ginsberg, who, listening intently, held up one hand toward them.

The speech was interrupted by another squeal, and then the radio resumed emitting nothing more than snaps, crackles, pops and waterfalls.

Ginsberg said, "That was Radio Zurich. There's been an H-bomb explosion in the States, in Death Valley. Either the war's started again, or some dud's gone off belatedly."

"Hmm," Baines said. "Well, better there than here—although, now that I come to think of it, it isn't entirely unpromising. But Doctor Ware, I think you hadn't quite finished?"

"I was only going to add that 'being of some help' to demons in this context makes no practical sense, either. Their hand is turned against everyone on Earth, and there is certainly no way that we could help them to carry their war to Heaven, even presuming that any of Heaven still stands. Someone of Father Domenico's school might just possibly manage to enter the Aristotelean spheres—though I doubt it—but I certainly couldn't."

"That bomb explosion seems to show that *somebody* is still fighting back," Baines said. "Providing that Jack isn't right about it's being a dud or a stray. My guess is that it's the Strategic Air Command and that they've just found out who the real enemy is. They had the world's finest data-processing center there under Denver and, in addition, McKnight had first-class civilian help, including Džejms Šatvje himself, and a RAND man I tried to get the Mamaroneck Research Institute to outbid the government for."

"I still don't quite see where that leaves us."

"I know McKnight very well—he's steered a lot of Defense Department orders my way—and I was going to have LeFebre make him president of Consolidated Warfare Service when he retired—as he was quite well aware. He's good in his field, which is reconnaissance, but he also has something of a one-track mind. If he's bombing demons, it might be a very good idea for me to suggest to him that he stop it—and why."

"It might at that," Ware said reflectively. "How will you get there?"

"A technicality. Radio Zurich is still operating, which almost surely means that their airfield is operating, too. Jack can fly a plane if necessary—but it probably won't be necessary. We had a very well-staffed office in Zurich—in fact it was officially our central headquarters—and I've got access to two Swiss bank accounts, the company's and my own. I'd damn well better put the money to some use before somebody with a little imagination realizes that the vaults might much better be occupied by himself, his family and twenty thousand cases of canned beans."

The project, Ware decided, had its merits. At least it would rid him, however temporarily, of Baines, whose society he was beginning to find a little tiresome, and of Jack Ginsberg, whom he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

distantly but positively loathed. It would of course also mean that he would be deprived of all human company if the Goat should after all come for him, but this did not bother him in the least; he had known for years that in that last confrontation every man is always alone—and most especially, every magician.

Perhaps he had also always known, somewhere in the deepest recesses of his mind, that he would indeed eventually take that last step into Satanism, but if so, he had very successfully suppressed it. And he had not quite taken it yet; he had committed himself to nothing, he had only agreed that Baines should go away, and Ginsberg too, to counsel someone he did not know to an inaction which might be quite without significance.

And while they were gone, perhaps he would be able to think of something better. It was the tiniest of small hopes and doubtless vain; but now he was beginning to be prepared to feed it. If he played his cards right, he might yet mingle with the regiment of angels who rebelled not, yet avowed to God no loyalty, of whom it is said that deep Hell refuses them, for, beside such, the sinner would be proud.

V

MONTE ALBANO, Father Domenico found with astonishment and a further rekindling of his hope, had been spared completely. It reared its Eleventh Century walls—rebuilt after the earthquake then by the abbot Gorgio who later became Pope John the Twentieth—as high above the valley as it always had and, as always too, was accessible only by muleback. Fr. Domenico lost more time locating a mule with an owner to take him up there than the whole trip from Positano had cost him. Eventually, however, the thing was done and he was within the cool walls of the library with the white monks, his colleagues, under the hot Frosinian sky.

Those assembled made up nearly the same company that had met during the winter to consider, fruitlessly, how Theron Ware and his lay client might be forestalled: Fr. Amparo, Fr. Umberto (the Director), and the remaining brothers of the Order, plus Fr. Uccello, Fr. Boucher, Fr. Vance, Fr. Anson, Fr. Selahny and Fr. Atheling. The visitors had apparently continued to stay in the monastery—if not in session—after the winter meeting, although in the interim Fr. Rosenblum had died. His place had been taken, though hardly filled, by Fr. Domenico's former apprentice Joannes, who, though hardly seventeen, looked now as though he had grown up very suddenly. Well, that was all right; they surely needed all the help that they could get and Fr. Domenico knew without false modesty that Joannes had been well trained.

After Fr. Domenico had been admitted, announced and conducted through the solemn and blessed joys of greeting and welcome, it became apparent that a discus-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sion—as was only to have been expected—had already been going on for many hours. Nor was he much surprised to find that it was simply another version of the discussion that had been going on in Positano: namely, how had Monte Albano been spared in the world-wide catastrophe and what did it mean? But in this version of the discussion Fr. Domenico could join with a much better heart.

And in fact he was also able to give it what amounted to an entirely new turn; for their Sensitive, the hermit-Father Uccello, had inevitably found his talents much coarsened and blunted by the proximity of so many other minds, and in consequence the white monks had only a general idea of what had gone on in Ware's palazzo since the last convocation—an impression supplemented by the world news, what of it there was, and by deduction, some of which was in fact wrong. Father Domenico recapitulated the story of the last conjuration briefly.

"All in all," he concluded, "forty-eight demons were let out of the Pit as a result of this ceremony, commanded to return at dawn. When it became apparent that the operation was completely out of hand, I invoked the Covenant and insisted that Ware recall them ahead of time, to which he agreed; but when he attempted to summon up LUCIFUGE ROCOFALE, to direct this abrogation, PUT SATANACHIA himself answered instead. When I attempted to exorcise this abominable creature my crucifix burst in my hands—and it was after that that the monster told us that God was already dead and that the ultimate victory had instead gone to the forces of Hell. The Goat promised to return for us all—all, that is, except Baines' other assistant Doctor Hess, whom Baphomet had already swallowed when Hess panicked and stepped out of his Circle—at dawn, but he failed to do so, and I subsequently left and came to Monte Albano as soon as it was physically possible."

"Do you recall the names and offices of all forty-eight?" said Fr. Atheling.

"I think I do—that is, I think I could; after all, I saw them all, and that's an experience which does not pass lightly from the memory. In any event, if I've blanked out on a few—which isn't unlikely either—they can doubtless be recovered under hypnosis. Why does that matter, may I ask, Father Atheling?"

"Simply because it is always useful to know the natures, as well as the numbers, of the forces arrayed against one."

"Not after the countryside is already overrun," said Fr. Anson. "If the battle and the war have already been lost we must have the whole crew to contend with now—not just all seventy-two princes, but every single one of the fallen angels. The number is closer to seven and a half million than it is to forty-eight."

"Seven million, four hundred and fifty thousand, nine hundred and twenty-six," Fr. Atheling said.

"Though the wicked may hide, the claws of crabs are dangerous people in bridges," Fr. Selahny

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intoned abruptly. As was the case with all his utterances, the group would doubtless find out what this one meant only after sorting out its mixed mythologies and folklores and long after it was too late to do anything about it. Nor did it do any good to ask him to explain; these things simply came to him, and he no more understood them than did his hearers. If God were indeed dead, Fr. Domenico wondered suddenly, Who could be dictating them now? But he put the thought aside as non-contributory.

"THERE is a vast concentration of new evil on the other side his courtly, hesitant old-man's voice. "The feeling is one of intense oppression, quite different from that which was common in New York or Moscow, but one such as I would expect of a massing of demons upon a huge scale. Forgive me, brothers, but I can be no more specific."

"We know you are doing the best you can," said the Director soothingly.

"I can feel it myself," said Fr. Monteith, who although not a Sensitive had had some experience with the herding of rebellious spirits. "But even supposing that we do not have to cope with so large an advance, as I certainly hope we do not, it seems to me that forty-eight is too large a sum for us if the Covenant has been voided. It leaves us without even an option."

Fr. Domenico saw that Joannes was trying to attract the Director's attention, although too hesitantly to make any impression. Fr. Umberto was not yet used to thinking of Joannes as a person at all. Capturing the boy's eyes, Fr. Domenico nodded.

"I never did unserstand the Covenant," the ex-apprentice said, thus encouraged. "That is, I didn't understand why God would compromise Himself in such a manner. Even with Job, He didn't make a deal with Satan but only allowed him to act unchecked for a certain period of time. And I've never found any mention of the Covenant in the grimoires. What are its terms, anyhow?"

Fr. Domenico thought the question well asked, if a trifle irrelevant, but an embarassed and slightly pitying silence showed that his opinion was not shared. In the end it was broken by Fr. Monteith, whose monumental patience was a byword in the chapter.

"I'm certainly not well versed in canon law, let alone in spiritual compacts," he said with more modesty than exactness. "But in principle, the Covenant is no more than a special case of the option of free will. The assumption appears to be that even in dealing with devilry, on the one hand no man shall be subjected to a temptation beyond his ability to resist, and on the other, no man shall slide into Heaven without having been tempted up to that point. In situations involving Transcendental or Ceremonial Magic, the Covenant is the line drawn in between. Where you would find its exact terms, I'm sure I don't know; I doubt that they have ever been written down. One thinks of the long struggle to understand the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rainbow, the other Covenant; once the explanation was in, it did not explain, except to show that every man sees his own rainbow, and what seems to stand in the sky is an optical illusion, not a theomorph. It is in the nature of the arrangement that the terms would vary in each individual case and that if you are incapable of determining where it is drawn for you woe betide you, and that is that."

Dear God, Fr. Domenico thought, *all my life I have been an amateur of Roger Bacon and I never once saw that that was what he meant to show by focusing his* Perspectiva *on the rainbow. Shall I have any more time to learn? I hope we are never tempted to make Monteith the Director, or we shall lose him to taking things out of the In box and putting them into the Out box, as we did Fr. Umberto . . .*

"Furthermore, it may well be still in existence," said Fr. Boucher. "As Father Domenico has already pointed out to Theron Ware himself, we have heard of the alleged death of God only through the testimony of the most unreliable witness imaginable. And it leaves many inconsistencies to be explained. *When* exactly is God supposed to have died? If it was as long ago as in Nietzsche's time, why had His angels and ministers of light seemed to know nothing of it in the interim? It's unreasonable to suppose that they were simply keeping up a good front until the battle actually broke out; Heaven simply isn't that kind of an organization. One would expect an absolute and perpetual monarchy to break down upon the death of the monarch quite promptly, yet in point of fact we saw no signs of any such thing until shortly after Christmas of this year."

"But we did see such signs at that time," Fr. Vance said.

"True, but this only poses another logical dilemma: What happened to the AntiChrist? Baphomet's explanation that he had been dispensed with as unnecessary to the victors, whose creature he would have been, doesn't hold water. The AntiChrist was to have appeared *before* the battle—and if the defeat of God is all that recent the prophecy should have been fulfilled; God still existed to compel it."

"Matthew eleven, fourteen," Fr. Selahny said, in an unprecedented burst of intelligibility. The verse of which he was reminding them referred to John the Baptist and it said: *And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*

"Yes," Fr. Domenico said, "I suppose it's possible that the AntiChrist might have come unrecognized. One always envisioned people flocking to his banner openly. But the temptation would have been more subtle and perhaps more dangerous had he crept past us, say in the guise of some popular philosopher, like that positive-thinking man in the States. Yet the proposal seems to allow even less room than did the Covenant for the exercise of free will."

There was silence. At last the Director said: "The Essenes argued that one must think and ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perience all evil before one can even hope to perceive good."

"If this be true doctrine," Fr. Domenico said, "then it follows that God is indeed still alive, and that Theron Ware's experiment—and World War Three—did not constitute Armageddon after all. What we may be confronted with instead is an Earthly Purgatory, from which Grace, and perhaps even the Earthly Paradise, might be won. Dare we think so?"

"We dare not think otherwise," said Fr. Vance. "The question is, How? Little that is in the New Testament, the teachings of the Church or the Arcana, seems very relevant to the present situation."

"No more is our traditional isolation," said Fr. Domenico. "Our only recourse now is to abandon it; to abandon our monastery and our mountain and go down into the world that we renounced when Charlemagne was but a princeling, to try to win it back by works and witnessing. And if we may not do this with the sweet aid of Christ, then we must nevertheless do it in His Name. Hope now is all we have."

"In sober truth," Fr. Boucher said quietly, "that is not so great a change.

VI

LEFT to his own devices and hence at last unobserved, Theron Ware thought that it might be well, after all, if he did essay a small magic. The possible difficulty lay in that all magic without exception depended upon the control of demons, as he had explained to Baines on his very first visit. But therein lay the attractiveness of the experiment, too, for what he wanted was information—whether he still had any such control.

And it would also be interesting—and possible to find out at the same time—to know whether or not there were any demons left in Hell. If there were it would imply, though it would not guarantee, that only the forty-eight that he had set loose were now terrorizing the world. This ruled out using the Mirror of Solomon, for the spirit of that mirror was the angel Anael. Probably he would not answer anyhow, for Ware was not a white magician and had carefully refrained from calling upon any angel ever since he had turned to the practice of the black Art—besides, it would be a considerable nuisance locating three white pigeons amid all this devastation.

Who, then? Among the demon princes he had decided not to call up for Baines' commission were several that he had ruled out because of their lesser potentialities for destruction, which would stand him in good stead were it to turn out that he had lost control; even in Hell there were degrees of malevolence, as of punishment.

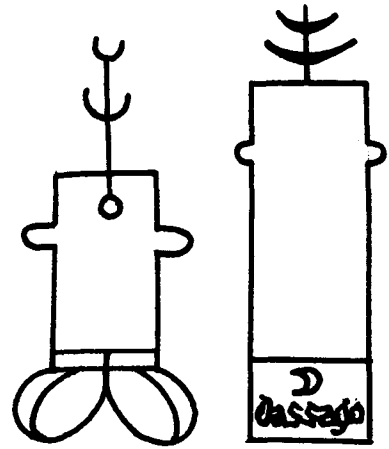
Also, Ware realized, his now would have to be a small magic indeed, for most of his instruments were now buried and those that were accessible were all contaminated beyond his power to purify them in any useful period of time. Clearly it was time to consult the book. He crossed to the lectern upon which it rested, pushed dust and potsherds off it with his sleeve,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unlocked the clasp and began to turn the great stiff pages, not without a qualm. Here, signed with his own blood, was half his life; the other half was down below, in the mud.

He found the name he needed almost at once: VASSAGO, a mighty prince, who in his first estate before the rebellion had belonged to the choir of the Virtues. The *Lemegeton* of the Rabbi Soloman said of him, Ware recalled, that he "declares things past, present and future and discovers what has been lost or hidden." Precisely to the purpose. Ware remembered, too, that his was the name most commonly invoked in ceremonial crystallomancy, which would be perfect in both scope and limitations for what Ware had in mind, involving no lengthy preparations of the operator, or even any precautionary diagrams, nor any apparatus except a crystal ball; and even for that he might substitute a pool of exorcised water, fifty liters of which still reposed in a happily unruptured stainless steel tank imbedded in the wall behind Ware's workbench.

Furthermore, he was the only demon in Ware's entire book of pacts who was represented therein by two seals or characters, so markedly different that without seeing them side by side one might never suspect that they belonged to the same entity. Topologically they were closely related, however, and Ware studied these relationships long and hard, knowing that he had once known what they meant but was now unable to recall it. These were the figures:



Ah, now he had it. The left-hand figure was VASSAGO's ordinary infernal sign but the second was the seal under which, it was said, he could be called by white magicians. Ware had never used it, nor had he needed to—the infernal seal had worked very well—and he had always doubted its efficacy, for by definition no commerce with a demon is white magic; however, it would be well to try it now. It might provide an additional factor of safety if it worked at all.

Into what should he draw the water? Everything was filthy. Eventually he decided simply to make a puddle on the workbench; it had been decades since he had studied oneirology, which he had scorned as a recourse for mere hedge-wizards, but to the best of his recollection it called for nothing more extraordinary than an earthenware vessel and could even be practiced successfully in an ordinary, natural forest pool, providing there was sufficient shade.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well then, to work.

STANDING insecurely before the workbench, the little weight of his spare upper body resting upon his elbows and his hands beside his ears, Theron Ware stared steadfastedly down into the little puddle of mud, his own bushy head —he had neglected his tonsure since the disaster—shading it from the even light of overcast sky. He had already stared so long since the first invocation that he felt himself on the verge of self-hypnosis, but now, he thought, there was a faint stirring down there in those minature Carboniferous depths, like a bubble or a highlight created by some non-existent sun. Yes, a faint spark—

"Eka, dva, tri, chatur, pancha, shas, sapta, ashta, nava, dasha, ekadasha," Ware counted. *"Per vota nostra ipse nunc surtat nobis dicatus* VASSAGO!"

The spark continued to grow until it was nearly the size of a ten-lira piece, stabilized, and gradually began to develop features. Despite its apparent diameter the thing did not look small; the effect rather was one of great distance, as though Ware were seeing a reflection of the moon.

The features were quite beautiful and wholly horrible. Superficially the shining face resembled a human skull but it was longer, thinner, more triangular, and it had no cheekbones. The eyes were huge and slanted almost all the way up to where a human hairline would have been; the nose extremely long in the bridge; the mouth as pink and tiny as that of an infant. The color and texture of the face were old ivory, like netsuke. No body was visible but Ware had not expected one; this was not, after all, a full manifestation but only an apparition.

The rosebud mouth moved damply and a pure soprano voice, like that of a choirboy, murmured soundlessly in Ware's mind.

WHO IS IT CALLS VASSAGO FROM STUDYING OF THE DAMNED? BEWARE!

Thou knowest me, demon of the Pit, Ware thought, *for to a pact hast thou subscribed with me and written into my book thine Infernal name. Thereby, and by thy seal which I do here exhibit, do I compel thee. My questions shalt thou answer and give true knowledge.*

SPEAK AND BE DONE.

Art still in Hell with thy brothers—or are all abroad about the Earth?

SOME DO GO TO AND FRO BUT WE ABIDE HERE. NEVERTHELESS, WE BE ON EARTH, ALBEIT NOT ABROAD.

In what wise?

THOUGH WE MAY NOT YET LEAVE NETHER HELL, WE BE AMONG YE: FOR THE PIT HATH BEEN RAISED UP, AND THE CITY OF DIS NOW STANDETH UPON THE EARTH.

Ware made no attempt to disquise his shock; after all, the creature could see into his mind.

How situate?

WHERE SHE STOOD FROM ETERNITY; IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

Ware suspected at once that the apparently allegorical form of this utterance concealed a literal meaning but it would do no good to ask

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for exact topographical particulars; demons paid little attention to Earthly political geography unless they were fomenting strife about boundaries or enclaves, which was not one of VASSAGO's roles. Could the reference be literary? That would be in accordance with the demon's nature. Nothing prevents devils from quoting scripture to their own advantage, so why not Tennyson?

Be this valley under the Ambassadorship of RIMMON?

NAY.

Then what officers inhabit the region wherein it lies? Divulge their names, great prince, to my express command!

THEY ARE THE INFERIORS OF ASTAROTH, WHO ARE CALLED SARGATANAS AND NEBIROS.

But which hath his asylum where Dis now stands?

THERE RULETH NEBIROS.

These were the demons of post-Columbian magic; they announced forth to the subjects all things which their lord hath commanded, according to the *Grimorium Verum*, in America, and the asylum of NEBIROS was further specified to be in the West. Of course: Death Valley. And NEBIROS, as it was said in the *Grand Grimoire*, was the field-marshal of Infernus and a great necromancer, "who goeth to and fro everywhere and inspects the hordes of perdition". The raising of the fortress of Dis in the domain of this great general most strongly suggested that the war was not over yet. Ware knew better, however, than to ask the demon whether God was in fact dead; for were He not the mere sounding of the Holy Name would so offend this minor prince as to terminate the apparition at once, if not render further ones impossible. Well, the question was probably unnecessary anyhow; he already had most of the information that he needed.

Thou art discharged.

THE shining face vanished with a flash of opalescence, exactly as though a soap bubble had broken, leaving Ware staring down at nothing but a puddle of mud, now already filming and cracking —except in the center where the face had been: that had evaporated completely. Straightening his aching back, he considered carefully the implications.

The military organization of the Descending Hierarchy was peculiar and authorities differed somewhat on its details. This was hardly surprising, for any attempt to relate the offices of the evil spirits to Earthly analogues was bound to be only an approximation, if not sometimes actively misleading. Ware was presently in the domain of HUTGIN, Ambassodor in Italy, and had never before had any need to invoke ASTAROTH or any of his inferior Intelligences. He was characterized by the *Grimorium Verum* as the Grand Duke of Hell, whereas Weirus referred to him as Grand Treasurer; while the *Grand Grimoire* did not mention him at all, assigning NEBIROS instead to an almost equivalent place. Nevertheless it seemed clear enough in general that while the domain of ASTAROTH might technically be in America, his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

principality was not confined thereto but might make itself known anywhere in the world. HUTGIN was a considerably lesser figure.

And tho war was not yet over and Ware might indeed find some way to make himself useful. Baines had been right about that, too. But in what way remained unclear.

Very probably he would have to go to Dis to find out. It was a terrifying thought but Ware could see no way around it. That was where the center of power was now, where the war would henceforth be directed; and there, if Baines actually succeeded in reaching the SAC in Denver, Ware conceivably might succeed in arranging some sort of a *détente*. Certainly he would be of no use squatting here in ruined Italy, with all the superior spirits half a world away.

But how to get there?

Would it be possible to compel ASTAROTH to provide him with some kind of an apport? This, too, was a terrifying thought. To the best of Ware's knowledge the last magician to have ridden astride a devil had been Gerbert, back in the Tenth Century. He had resorted to it only to save his life from a predecessor of the Inquisition, whose attention he had amply earned; and, moreover, had lived through the ordeal to become Pope Sylvester II.

Gerbert had been a great man and, though Ware rather doubted that he had been any better a magician than Ware was, he did not feel prepared to try that conclusion just now. In any event, the process was probably unnecessarily drastic; transvection might serve the purpose just as well, or better. Though he had never been to a sabbat, he knew the theory and the particulars well enough. Included in the steel cabinets which held his magickal pharmacopoeia were all the ingredients necessary for the flying ointment, and the compounding of it required no special time or ritual.

First, however, he drew from the cabinet a flat slab of synthetic ruby about the size and shape of an opened match folder; and from his cabinet of instruments, a burin. Upon the ruby, on the day of Mars, which is 0100, 0800, 1500 or 2200 on that day, he would engrave the following seal and characters:

This he would henceforth carry in his right shirt pocket, like a reliquary. Though he would accept no help from ASTAROTH if he could possibly avoid it, it would be well, since he was going to be travelling in that fiend's domains, to be wearing his colors. As a purist it bothered him a little that the ruby was synthetic—but his disturbance, he knew, was only an aesthetic one, ASTAROTH was a solar spirit and the ancients, all the way through Albertus Magnus, had believed that rubies were engendered in the Earth by the influence of the Sun—but since they were not in fact formed that way, the persistence of the ruby in the ritual was only another example of one of the primary processes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of magic, *superstition*, the gradual supremacy of the sign over the thing.

For a magician, Ware reflected, there were indeed distinct advantages in being able to practice ten centuries after Gerbert had ridden upon his demon eagle.

VII

TRANSVECTION, too, has its hazards, Ware discovered. He crossed the Atlantic without incident in well under three hours—indeed, he suspected that in some aspect beyond the reach of his senses, the flight was taking place only partially in real time—and it began to look as though he would easily reach his goal before dawn. The candle affixed by its own tallow to the bundle of twigs and rushes before him (for only the foolhardy fly a broomstick with the brush trailing, no matter what is shown to the contrary in conventional Hallowe'en cartoons) burned as steadily as though he were not in motion at all, casting a brilliant light ahead along his path; any ships at sea that might have seen him might have taken him to be an unusually brilliant meteor. As he approached the eastern United States he wondered how he would show up on radar; the dropping of the bomb two days ago suggested that there might still be a number of functioning radomes there. In quieter times, he thought, he might perhaps have touched off another flying-saucer scare. Or was he visible at all? He discovered that he did not know.

But once over land he slowed himself down and lost altitude in order to get his bearings—and within what seemed to him to be only a very few minutes he was grounded head over heels by the sound of a churchbell forlornly calling what faithful might remain to midnight mass. He remembered belatedly, when he got his wind back, that in some parts of Germany during the Seventeenth Century flowering of the popular Goëtic cults, it had been the custom to toll churchbells all night long as a protection against witches who might be passing overhead on the way to the Brocken; but the memory did him no good now.

He had fallen in a rather mountainous, heavily timbered area he guessed to be somewhere in eastern Pennsylvania. Though it was now late April, which was doubtless warm in Positano, the night here was decidely cold, especially for a thin man clad in nothing more than a light smear of unguent. He was instantly and violently all ashiver, for the sound of the bell had destroyed the protective as well as the transvective power of the flying ointment. He hastily undid the bundle of clothes which was tied to the broomstick but there were not going to be enough of them; after all, he had assembled them with Death Valley in mind. Also, he was beginning to feel drowsy and dizzy and his pulse was blurred and banging with tachycardia. Among other things, the flying ointment contained both mandragora and belladonna, and now that the magic was gone out of it, these were exerting their inevitable side effects. He would have to wash the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stuff off the minute he could find a stream, cold or no cold.

And not only because it was drugging him. Still other ingredients of the ointment were rather specifically organic in nature, and these gave it a characteristic smell which the heat of his body would gradually ripen. The chances were all too good that there would be some people in this country of the Amish—and not all of them old ones—who would know what the odor meant. Until he had had some kind of a bath it would be dangerous even to ask for help.

Before dressing he wiped off as much of it as he could with the towel in which the clothing had been tied. This he buried, together with the taper and the brush from the besom—and after making sure that the ruby talisman was still safely in his pocket, he set out.

The nightblack, hilly, forested countryside would have made difficult going even for an experienced walker. Ware's life on the other hand, had been nearly inactive except intellectually and he was on the very near side of his fiftieth birthday. To his advantage, on the other hand, stood the fact that he had always been small and wiry and the combination of a slightly hyperthyroid metabolism and an ascetic calling—he did not even smoke—had kept him that way, so that he made fair progress. An equally lifelong love of descriptive astronomy, plus the necessity of astrology to his art, helped to keep him going in the right direction.

JUST before dawn he stumbled upon a small, rock-bedded stream and through the gloom heard the sound of a nearby water fall. He moved against the current and shortly found this to be the spillway of a small log dam. Promptly he stripped and bathed under it, pronouncing in a whisper as he did so all three of the accompanying prayers from the rite of lustration as prescribed for the preparatory triduum in the *Grimorium Verum*. Though the water was neither warm nor exorcised it was obviously pure and that would have to do.

The ablution was every bit as cold as he had expected it to be, and even colder was the process of air-drying himself; but he endured it stoically, for he had to get rid of what remained of the ointment to put on damp clothes would also be dangerous. While he waited, his teeth chattering, faint traces of light began to appear through the trees from the east.

In answer, massive gray rectangular shapes began to sketch themselves against the darkness downstream and before long he was able to see that to the west—which was the way the stream was momentarily running—was a substantial farm. As if in confirmation of help to come, a cock crowed in the distance, a traditional ending for a night of magic.

But as the dawn continued to brighten he saw that there would be no help for him here. Under the angle of the roof of the large barn nearest to him a circular diagram had been painted, like a formalized flower with an eye in it.

As Jack Ginsberg had taken the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pains to find out long before he and his boss had even met the magician, Ware had been born and raised in the States and was still a citizen. As his name showed, his background was Methodist—but nevertheless he knew a hex sign when he saw one. And it gave him an idea.

The opportunity to gather new data should not be missed.

Reaching into his shirt pocket, he turned the ruby around so that the seal and characters on it faced outwards. In a low voice, he said, "THOMATOS, BENESSER, FLEANTER."

Under proper circumstances these words of the *Comte de Cabalis* encompassed the operator with thirty-three several Intelligences—but since the circumstances were not proper Ware was not surprised when nothing happened. For one thing, his lustration had been imperfect; for another, he was using the wrong talisman—the infernal spirits of this ceremony were not devils but Salamanders or fire elementals. Nevertheless he now added: "LITAN, ISER, OSNAS."

A morning breeze sprang up and a leaflike whispering ran around him, which might or might not have been the voices of many beings individually saying, "NANTHER, NANTHER, NANTHER, NANTHER. . ." Touching the talisman, Ware said, "GITAU, HURANDOS: RIDAS, TALIMOL," and then, pointing to the barn, "UUSUR, ETAR."

The result should have been a highly localized but destructive earthquake but there was not even a minor tremor, though he was pretty sure that he really had heard the responsive voices of the fire spirits. The spell simply would not work under the eye of the hex sign—one more piece of evidence that the powers of evil were still under some kind of restraint. That was good to know but in a way, too, Ware was quite disappointed; for had he gotten his earthquake, the further words SOUTRAM, UBARSINENS would have compelled the Intelligences to carry him across the rest of his journey. He uttered them anyhow—but without result.

Neither in the *Comte de Gabalis* or its very late sucessor, *The Black Pullet*, did this ritual offer any word of dismissal, but nevertheless for safety's sake he now added: "RABIAM." Had this worked he would have found himself carried home again, where at least he could have started over again with more ointment and another broomstick—but it did not. There was no recourse now but to seek out the farmhouse and try to persuade the farmer to give him something to eat and drive him to the nearest railhead. It was too bad that the man could not be told that he had just been protected by Ware from a demonic onslaught—but unfortunately the Amish did not believe that there was any such thing as white magic and in the ultimate analysis they were quite right not to do so, whatever delusions about the point might be harbored by Fr. Domenico and his fellows.

The farmhouse proper looked clean, fat and prosperous but it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was suspiciously quiet. By this hour everyone should be up and beginning the day's chores. Ware approached with caution, alert for guns or dogs, but the silence continued.

The caution had been needless. Inside, the place was an outright slaughterhouse, resembling nothing so much as the last act of Webster's *The White Devil.* Ware inspected it with clinical fascination. The family had been a large one—the parents, one grandparent, four daughters, three sons and the inevitable dog—and at some time during the preceding night they had suddenly fallen upon each other with teeth, nails, pokers, a buggy-whip, a bicycle chain, a cleaver, a pig knife and the butt end of a smooth-bore rifle old enough to have been a relic of the Boer War. It was an obvious case of simultaneous mass possession, probably worked through the women, as these things almost always were. Doubtless they would infinitely have preferred a simple localized earthquake, but from an attack like this no conceivable peasant hex sign could have protected them.

Probably nothing could have, for as it had turned out, in their simple traditional religiosity they had chosen the wrong side. Like most of mankind they had been born victims—even a beginning study of the Problem of Evil would have suggested to them that their God had never played fair with them, as indeed He had caused to be written out in *Job* for all to read. And their primitive backwoods demonology had never honestly admitted that there really were two sides to the Great Game, let alone allowed them any inkling of who the players were.

While he considered what to do next he prowled around the kitchen and the woodshed, where the larder was, trying not to slip or step on anybody. There were only two eggs—today's had obviously not been harvested—but he found smoked, streaky rashers of bacon, a day-old loaf of bread just ripe for cutting, nearly a pound of country butter and a stone jug of cold milk. All in all it was a good deal more than he could eat but he built a fire in the old wood-burning stove, cooked the eggs and the bacon and did his best to put it all down. After all, he had no idea when he would meet his next meal. He had already decided that he was not yet desperate enough to risk calling for an apport, but instead would keep walking generally westward until he met an opportunity to steal a car. (He would find none on the farm; the Amish still restricted themselves to horses.)

As he came out of the farmhouse into the bright morning, a sandwich in both hip pockets, he heard from the undestroyed barn a demanding lowing of cattle. *Sorry, friends,* he thought. *Nobody's going to milk you this morning.*

VIII

BAINES knew the structure and approaches of Strategic Air Command headquarters rather better than the Department of Defense would have thought right and proper even for a civilian with Q

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clearance, although there had been several people in DOD who would not have been at all surprised at it. The otherwise passengerless jet carrying him and Jack Ginsberg made no attempt to approach either Denver Airport or the U. S. Air Force Academy field at Colorado Springs, both of which, he correctly assumed, would no longer be in existence anyhow. Instead, he directed the pilot to land at Limon, a small town which was the easternmost vertex of a nearly equilateral triangle formed by these three points. Hidden there was one terminus of an underground rapid transit line which led directly into the heart of SAC's fortress—and was now its only surviving means of physical access to the outside world.

Baines and his secretary had been there only once before, and the guards at the station now were not only new but thoroughly frightened. Hence, despite the possession of ID cards countersigned by General McKnight, they were subjected to over an hour of questioning, fingerprinting, photographing of retinal blood vessel patterns, frisking and fluoroscopy for hidden weapons or explosives, telephone calls into the interior and finally a closed-circuit television confrontation with McKnight himself before they were even allowed into the waiting room.

As if in partial compensation, the trip itself was rapid transit indeed. The line was a gravity-vacuum tube, bored in an exactly straight line under the curvature of the earth and kept as completely exhausted of air as outgrassing from its steel cladding would permit. The vacuum in the tube was in fact almost as hard as the atmosphere of the moon. From the waiting room Baines and Jack Ginsberg were passed through two airlocks into a seamlessly welded, windowless metal capsule which was sealed behind them. Here their guards strapped them in securely, for their own protection, for the initial kick of compressed air behind the capsule, abetted by rings of electromagnets, gave it an acceleration of more than five miles per hour per second. Thereafter the capsule was simply allowed to fall to the mathematical midpoint of its right of way, gaining speed at about twenty-eight feet per second per second; since the rest of the journey was uphill, the capsule was slowed in proportion by gravity, friction and the compression of the almost nonexistent gasses in the tube still ahead of it, which without any extra braking whatsoever brought it to a stop at the SAC terminus of the line so precisely that only a lovepat from a fifteen horsepower engine was needed to line up its airlock with that of the station.

"When you're riding a thing like this it's hard to believe that there's any such thing as a devil, isn't it?" Jack Ginsberg said.

"Maybe," Baines said. "A large part of the mystic tradition says that the possession and use of secular knowledge—or even the desire for it—is in itself evil, according to Ware. But here we are."

BUT in the smooth-running, even-temperatured caverns of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the SAC Baines himself felt rather reassured. There was no Goat grinning over his shoulder yet. McKnight was an old friend; he was pleased to see Buelg again and honored to meet Satvje; and down here, at least, everything seemed to be under control. It was also helpful to find that both McKnight and his two advisors not only already knew the real situation but had very nearly accepted it. Only Buelg remained a little sceptical at the beginning and seemed quite taken aback to find Baines, of all people, providing independent testimony to the same effect as had the computer. When the new facts Baines had brought had been fed into the machine and the machine had produced in response a whole new batch of conclusions entirely consistent with the original hypothesis, Buelg seemed convinced, although it was plain that he still did not like it. Well, who did?

At long last they were comfortably settled in McKnight's office with three tumblers of Jack Daniels (Jack Ginsberg did not drink, and neither did Suatvje) and no one to interrupt them but an occasional runner from Chief Hay. Though the runner was a coolly pretty blonde girl and the USAF's women's auxiliary had apparently adopted the miniskirt, Ginsberg did not seem to notice. Perhaps he was still in shock from his recent run-in with the succubus. To Baines' eyes the girl did look rather remarkably like Ware's Greta, which should have captured Jack instantly; but then, in the long run, most women looked alike to Baines.

"That bomb did you no good at all, I take it," he said.

"Oh, I wouldn't go so far as to say that," McKnight said. "True, it didn't destroy the city—or even hurt it visibly—but it certainly seemed to take them by surprise. For about an hour after the fireball went up, the sky above the target was full of them. It was like firing a flashbulb in a cave full of sleeping bats—and we got pictures, too."

"Any evidence that you, uh, destroyed any of them?"

"Well, we saw a lot of them going back to the city under their own power despite very bad design, they seem to fly pretty well but we don't have any count of how many went up. We didn't see any falling but that might have been because some of them had been vaporized."

"Not bloody likely. Their bodies may have been vaporized, but the bodies were borrowed in the first place. Like knocking down a radio-controlled aircraft: the craft may be a total loss, but the controlling intelligence is unharmed, somewhere else, and can send another one against you whenever it likes."

"Excuse me, Doctor Baines, but the analogy is inexact," Buelg said. "We know that because we did get a lot out of the bomb besides simply stirring up a flurry. High-speed movies of the column of the mushroom as it went up show a lot of the creatures trying to reform. One individual we were able to follow went through thirty-two changes in the first minute. The changes are all incredible and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beyond any physical theory or model we can erect to account for them, but they do show, first, that the creature was seriously inconvenienced and, second that it wanted and perhaps needed to hold on to *some* kind of physical form. That's a start. It suggests to me that had we been able to confine them all in the fireball, where the temperatures are much higher still, no gamut of change they could have run through would have done them any good. Eventually they would have been stripped of the last form and utterly destroyed."

"The last form, maybe," Baines said. "But the spirit would remain. I don't know why they're clinging to physical forms so determinedly, but it probably has only a local and tactical reason, something to do with the prosecuting of the present war. But you can't destroy a spirit by such means any more than you can destroy a message by burning the piece of paper it's written on."

AS HE said this he became uncomfortably aware that he had gotten the argument out of some sermon against atheism that he had heard as a boy, and had thought simple-minded even then. But since then he had seen demons —and a lot more closely than anybody else here had.

"That is perhaps an open question," Satvje said heavily. "I am not myself a skeptic, you should understand, Doctor Baines, but I have to remind myself that no spirit has ever been so intensively tested to destruction before. Inside a thermonuclear fireball even the nuclei of hydrogen atoms find it difficult to retain their integrity."

"Atomic nuclei remain matter, and the conservation laws still apply. Demons are neither matter nor energy; they are something else."

"We do not know that they are not energy," Satvje said. "They may well be fields, falling somewhere within the electro-magnetico-gravitic triad. Remember that we have never achieved a unified field theory—even Einstein repudiated his in the last years of his life, and quantum mechanics—with all respect to de Broglie—is only a clumsy avoidance of the problem. These . . . spirits . . . may be such unified fields. And one characteristic of such fields might be one hundred percent negative entropy."

"There couldn't be any such thing as completely negative entropy," Buelg put in. "Such a system would constantly *accumulate* order, which means that it would run backwards in time and we would never be aware of it at all. You have to allow for Planck's Constant. This would be the only stable case—"

He wrote rapidly on a pad, stripped off the sheet and passed it across the table. The note read, in very neat lettering:

$$H(x) - H_y(x) = C + \epsilon$$

The girl came in with another manifold of sheets from the computer, and this time Jack Ginsberg's eye could be observed to be wandering haunchward a little.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Baines had never objected to this—he preferred his most valuable employees to have a few visible and usable weaknesses—but for once he almost even sympathized; he was feeling a little out of his depth.

"Meaning what?" he said.

"Why," Šatvje said, a little patronizingly, "eternal life, of course. Life *is* negative entropy. Stable negative entropy is eternal life."

"Barring accidents," Buelg said, with a certain grim relish. "We have no access yet to the gravitic part of the spectrum, but the electromagnetic sides are totally vulnerable and with the clues we've got now we ought to be able to be able to burst into such a closed system like a railroad spike going through an auto tire."

"If you can kill a demon," Baines said slowly, "Then—"

"That's right," Buelg said affably. "Angel, devil, ordinary immortal soul—you name it, we can do for it. Not right away, maybe, but before very long."

"Perhaps the ultimate human achievement," Šatvje said, with a dreaming, almost beautific expression. "The theologians call condemnation to Hell the Second Death. Soon, perhaps, we may be in a position to give the Third Death . . . the bliss of complete extinction . . . liberation from the Wheel!"

McKnight's eyes were now also wandering, though toward the ceiling. He wore the expression of a man who has heard all this before and is not enjoying it any better the second time. Baines himself was very far from being bored—indeed, he was as close to horrified fascination as he had ever been in his life—but clearly it was time to bring everybody back to Earth.

He said, "Talk's cheap. Do you have any actual plans?"

"You bet we do," McKnight said, suddenly galvanized. "I've had Chief Hays run me an inventory of the country's remaining military power and believe me, there's a lot of it. I was surprised myself. We are going to mount a major attack upon this City of Dis, and for it we're going to bring some things up out of the ground that the American people have never seen before and neither has anybody else, including this pack of demons. I don't know why they're just sitting there, but maybe it's because they think they've already got us licked. Well, they're dead wrong. Nobody can lick the United States—not in the long run!"

IT WAS an extraordinary sentiment from a man who had been maintaining for years that the United States had "lost" China, "surrendered" Korea, "abandoned" Vietnam and was overrun by home-bred Communists; but Baines, who knew the breed, saw no purpose in calling attention to the fact. *Their arguments, not being based in reason, cannot be swayed by reason.*

Instead he said, "General, believe me, I advise against it. I know some of the weapons you're talking about and they're pretty powerful. I ought to know; my company designed and supplied some of them, so it would be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against my own interests to run them down to you. But I very much doubt that any of them will do any good under the present circumstances."

"That, of course, remains to be seen," McKnight said.

"I'd rather we didn't. If they work we may find ourselves worse off than before. That's the point I came here to press. The demons are about ninety percent in charge of the world now—but you'll notice that they haven't taken any further steps against us. There's a reason for this. They are fighting against another Opponent entirely, and it's quite possible that we ought to be on their side."

McKnight leaned back in his chair, with the expression of a president confronted at a press conference with a question on which he had not been briefed.

"Let me be quite sure I understand you, Doctor Baines," he said. "Do you propose that the present invasion of the United States was a good thing? And, further, that we ought not to be opposing the occupying forces with all our might? That indeed we ought instead to be aiding and abetting the powers responsible for it?"

"I don't propose any aiding and abetting whatsoever," Baines said, with an inward sigh. "I just think we ought to lay off for a while, that's all, until we see how the situation works out."

"You are almost the last man in the world," McKnight said stiffly, "whom I would have suspected of being a ComSymp, let alone a prochink. When I have your advice entered upon the record I will also add an expression of my personal confidence. In the meantime, the attack goes forward as scheduled."

Baines said nothing more, advisedly. It had occurred to him, out of his experience with Theron Ware, that angels fallen and unfallen and the immortal part of man partook of and had sprung from the essentially indivisible nature of their Creator; that if these men could destroy that Part, they could equally well dissolve the Whole; that a successful storming of Dis would inevitably be followed by a successful war upon Heaven; and that if God were not dead yet, He soon might be.

However it turned out, it looked like it was going to be the most interesting civil war he had ever run guns to.

IX

UNITED STATES
ARMED FORCES
Strategic Air Command Office
Denver, Colorado

Date: May 1
MEMORANDUM: Number I
TO: All Combat Arms
SUBJECT: General Combat Orders

1. This Memorandum supercedes all previous directives on this subject.

2. The United States has been invaded and all combat units will stand in readiness to expel the invading forces.

3. The enemy has introduced a number of combat innovations of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which all units must be made thoroughly aware. All officers will therefore read this Memorandum in full to their respective commands and will thereafter post it in a conspicuous place. All commands should be sampled for familiarity with the contents of the Memorandum.

4. Enemy troops are equipped with individual body armor. In accordance with ancient Oriental custom this armor has been decorated in various grotesque shapes in the hope of frightening the opposition. It is expected that the American soldier will simply laugh at this primitive device. All personnel are warned, however, that as armor these "demon suits" are extremely effective. A very high standard of marksmanship will be required against them.

5. An unknown number of the enemy body armor units, perhaps approaching 100%, are capable of free flight, like the jump suits supplied to U.S. Mobile Infantry. Ground forces will therefore be alert to possible attack from the air by individual enemy troops as well as by conventional aircraft.

6. It is anticipated that in combat the enemy will employ various explosive, chemical and toxic agents which may produce widespread novel effects. All personnel are hereby reminded that these effects will be either natural in origin or illusions.

7. Following the reading of this Memorandum, all officers will read to their commands those paragraphs of the Articles of War pertaining to the penalties for cowardice in battle.

By order of the Commander in Chief:

D. WILLIS MCKNIGHT
General of the Armies, USAF

BECAUSE of the destruction of Rome, and of the Vatican with it—alas for that great library and treasure-house of all Christendom!—the Holy See had been moved to Venice and was now housed in almost its former magnificence in the Sala del Collegio of the Palazzo Ducale, where, under a ceiling by Veronese, the doges had been accustomed to receive their ambassadors to other city states. It was the first time the palace had been used by anybody but tourists since Napoleon had forced the abdication of Lodovico Manin exactly eleven hundred years after the election of the first doge.

There were no tourists here now, of course; the city, broiling hot and stinking of the garbage in its canals, brooded lifelessly under the Adriatic sun, a forgotten museum. Nobody was about in the crazy narrow streets and the cramped *ristoranti* but the native Venetians, their livelihood gone, sullenly starving together in small groups and occasionally snarling at each other in their peculiar dialect. Many already showed signs of radiation sickness: their hair was shedding in patches and pools of vomit caught the sunlight, ignored by everyone but the flies.

As for hope, they had none. In this they were not alone. Throughout his journey to Venice Fr. Domenico had found nothing but terror, misery and a haunted pop-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ulace which could not but conclude that everything the Church had taught them for nearly two thousand years had been lies.

Yet hope somehow found its way forward. On an oppressive afternoon while he was trying to preach to a group of young thugs, most of them too surly and indifferent even to jeer, before the little Church of Sta. Maria degli Miracoli, his audience was suddenly galvanized by a series of distant whistles. The whistles, as Fr. Domenico knew well enough, had been until only recently the signals of the young wolves of Venice, to report the spotting of some escortless English schoolmarm, pony-tailed Bennington art student or gaggle of Swedish girls. There was no such prey about now, but nevertheless the piazzetta emptied within a minute.

Bewildered and, of course, apprehensive, Fr. Domenico followed. A rumor had gone around that a puff of white smoke had been seen over the Palazzo Ducale. This was highly unlikely, since—what with the fear of another fire which constantly haunted the palace—there was no stove in it anywhere in which to burn ballots; nevertheless, The Pope had died with Rome and the expectation of a new Pope had run through the city like fire itself. By the time Fr. Domenico reached the vast square opposite the basilica (for after all he, too, had come to Venice in search of a Pope) it was so crowded as to scarcely leave standing room for the pigeons.

If there were indeed to be any announcement it would have to come Venetian style from the top of the Giant's Staircase of Antonio Rizzo; the repetitive arches of the first floor loggia offered no single balcony on which a Pope might appear. Fr. Domenico pressed forward into the great internal courtyard toward the staircase, at first saying "*Prego, prego*," and then "*Scusate, scusate mi*," to no effect whatsoever, and finally with considerable judicious but hard monkish use of elbows and knees.

Over the tense rumbling of the crowd there sounded suddenly an antiphonal braying of many trumpets—something of Gabrielli's, no doubt—and at the same time Fr. Domenico found himself jammed immovably against the coping of the cannon-founder's well, which had long since been scavenged clean of the tourists' coins. By luck it was not a bad position; from here he had quite a clear view up the staircase and between the towering statues of Mars and Neptune. The great doors had already been opened and the cardinals in their scarlet finery were ranked on either side of the portico. Between them and a little forward stood two pages, one of them holding a red cushion upon which stood something tall and glittering.

Amidst the fanfare, an immensely heavy tolling began to boom: La Trottiera, the bell which had once summoned the members of the Grand Council to mount their horses and ride over the wooden bridges to a meeting. The combination of bell and trumpets was solemnly beautiful and under it the crowd fell quickly silent. Yet

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the difference from the Roman ritual was disturbing and something else was wrong about it, too. What was that thing on the cushion? It certainly could not be the Tiara—was it the golden horn of the doges?

The music and the tolling stopped. Into the pigeon-cooing silence a cardinal cried in Latin:

"We have a Pope, *Summus Antistitum Antistes*! And it is his will that he be called Juvenember LXIX!"

The unencumbered page now stepped forward. He called in the vernacular:

"Here is your Pope, and we know it will please you."

From the shadow of the great doors, there stepped forth into the sunlight between the statues, bowing his head to accept the golden horn, his face white and mild as milk, a comely old man with a goshawk on his wrist, whom Fr. Domenico had first and last seen on Black Easter, released from the Pit by Theron Ware—the demon AGARES.

An enormous shout rose from the crowd and the trumpets and the bell resumed, now joined by all the rest of the bells in the city and by many drums and the firing of cannon. Choking with horror, Fr. Domenico fled as best he could.

THE festival went on all week, climaxed by bull-dancing in the Cretan style in the courtyard of the Palazzo, and by fireworks at night, while Fr. Domenico prayed. This event was definitive. The AntiChrist had arrived, however belatedly, and therefore God still lived. Fr. Domenico could do no more good in Italy; he must now go to Dis, into Hell-Mouth itself, and challenge Satan to grant His continuing existence. Nor would it be enough for Fr. Domenico to aspire to be the AntiSatan. If necessary—most terrifying of all thoughts—he must now expose himself to the temptation and the election, by no Earthly college, of becoming the vicar of Christ whose duty it would be to harrow this earthly Hell.

Yet how to get there? He was isolated on an isthmus of mud, and he had no Earthly resources whatsoever. Just possibly, some rite of white magic might serve to carry him, although he could remember none that seemed applicable; but that would involve returning to Monte Albano and, in any event, he felt instinctively that no magic of any kind would be appropriate now.

In this extremity he bethought him of certain legends and attested miracles of the early saints, some of whom in their exaltations were said to have been lifted long distances through the air. Beyond question he was not a saint; but if his forthcoming role was to be as he suspected, some similar help might be vouchsafed him. He tried to keep his mind turned away from the obvious and most exalted example of all, and equally to avoid thinking about the doubt-inducing fate of Simon Magus—a razor's edge which not even his Dominican training made less than nearly impossible to negotiate.

Nevertheless, his shoulders squared, his face set, Fr. Domen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ico walked resolutely toward the water.

X

EVEN after the complete failure of air power in Vietnam to pound one half of a tenth-rate power into submission, General McKnight remained a believer in its supremacy; but he was not such a fool as to do without ground support, knowing very well the elementary rule that territory must be occupied as well as devastated, or even the most decisive victory will come unstuck. By the day—or rather, the night—for which the attack was scheduled, he had moved three armored divisions into the Panamint range and had two more distributed through the Grapevine, Funeral and Black Mountains, which also bristled with rocket emplacements. This was by no means either as big or as well divided a force as he should have liked to have used, especially on the east, but since it was all that the country had left to offer him, he had to make it do.

His battle plan was divided into three phases. Remembering that the test bomb had blown some thousands of enemy troops literally sky high for what was tactically speaking quite a long period of time, he intended to begin with a serial bombardment of Dis with as many of his remaining nuclear weapons as he could use up just short of making the surrounding territory radiologically lethal to his own men. These warheads might not do the city of the demons any damage—a proposition which he still regarded with some incredulity—but if they would again disorganize the enemy and keep him from reforming, that would be no mean advantage in itself.

Phase Two was designated to take advantage of the fact that the battleground from his point of view was all downhill, the devils, with stunning disregard of elementary strategy, having located their fortress at the lowest point in the valley, on the site of what had previously been Badwater, which was actually two hundred and eighty-two feet below sea level. When the nuclear bombardment ended it would be succeeded immediately by a continued hammering with conventional explosives, by artillery, missiles and planes. These would include phosphorus bombs, again probably harmless to devils, but which would in any event produce immense clouds of dense white smoke which might impair visibility for the enemy; his own troops could see through it handily enough by radar and would always be able to see the main target through the infrared telescope or "sniperscope," since even under normal conditions it was always obligingly kept red hot. Under cover of this bombardment, McKnight planned a rush of armor upon the city, spearheaded by half-track-mounted laser projectors. It was McKnight's theory, supported neither by his civilian advisors nor by the computer, that the thermonuclear fireball had failed to vaporize the iron walls because its heat had been too generalized and diffuse, and that the concentrated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heat of four or five or a dozen laser beams, all focused on one spot, might punch its way through like a rapier going through cheese. This onslaught was to be aimed directly at the gates. Of course these would be better defended than any other part of the perimeter, but a significant number of the defenders might still be flapping wildly around in the air amid the smoke and, in any event, when one is trying to breach a wall, it is only common sense to begin at a point which *already* has a hole in it.

If such a breach were actually effected an attempt would be made to enlarge it with land torpedos, particularly burrowing ones of the Hess type which would have been started on their way at the beginning of Phase One. These had never seen use before in actual combat and were supposed to be graveyard secret—though with the profusion of spies and traitors with which America had been swarming, in McKnight's view, before all this had begun, he doubted that the secret had been very well kept. (After all, if even Baines . . .) He was curious also about the actual effectiveness of another secret, the product of an almost incestuous union of chemistry and nucleonics called TDX, a compound as unstable as TNT which was made of gravity-polarized atoms; McKnight had only the vaguest idea of what this jargon was supposed to have the property of exploding in a flat plane, instead of expanding evenly in all directions like any Christian explosive.

Were the gate forced, the bombardment would stop and Phase Three would follow. This would be an infantry assault, supported by individually airborne troops in their rocket-powered flying harness, and supplemented by an attempted paratroop landing inside the city. If on the other hand the gate did not go down, there would be a most unwelcome Phase Four —a general and, hopefully, orderly retreat.

THE whole operation could be watched both safely and conveniently from the SAC's Command Room under Denver and directed in the same way; there was a multitude of television screens, some of which were at the individual command consoles provided for each participating general. The whole complex closely resembled the now extinct Space Center at Houston, which had in fact been modeled after it. Technically, spaceflight and modern warfare are almost identical operations from the command point of view. At the front of this cavern and quite dominating it was a master screen of Cinerama proportions—at its rear was something very like a sponsors' booth, giving McKnight and his guests an overview of the whole, as well as access to a bank of small screens on which he could call into being any individual detail of the action.

McKnight did not bother to occupy the booth until the nuclear bombardment was over, knowing well enough that the immense amount of ionization it would produce would make non-cable television reception impossible for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quite some time. (the fallout was going to be hell, too—but almost all of it would miss Denver, the east coast was dead, and the fish and the Europeans would have to look out for themselves.) When he finally took over, the conventional bombardment was just beginning. With him were Baines, Buelg, Chief Hay and Šatvje; Jack Ginsberg had expressed no particular interest in watching, and since Baines did not need him here, he had been excused to go below, presumably to resume his lubricious pursuit of Hay's comely runner.

Vision on the great master screen was just beginning to clear as they took their seats, although there was still considerable static. Weather Control reported that it was a clear brightly moonlit night over all of the southwest, but in point of fact the top of the great multiple nuclear mushroom, shot through with constant lightning, now completely covered the southern third of California and all of the two states immediately to the east of it. The units and crews crouching in their bivouacs and emplacements along the sides of the mountains facing away from the valley clung grimly to the rocks against hurricane updrafts in temperatures that began at a hundred and fifty degrees and went on up from there. No unit which had been staked out on any of the inside faces of any of the ranges reported anything, then or ever; even the first missiles and shells to come screaming in toward Dis exploded incontinently in midair the moment they rose above the sheltering shadows of the mountain peaks. No thermocouple existed which would express in degrees the temperature at the heart of the target itself; spectographs taken from the air showed it to be cooling from a level of about two and a half million electron volts, a figure as utterly impossible to relate to human experience as are the distances in miles between the stars.

Nevertheless, the valley cooled with astonishing rapidity, and once visibility was restored, it was easy to see why. More than two hundred square miles of it had been baked and annealed into a shallow, even dish, still glowing whitely but shot through with the gorgeous colours of impurities, like a borax bead in the flame of a blowpipe; and this was acting like the reflector of a searchlight, throwing the heat outward through the atmosphere into space in an almost solidly visible column. At its center, as at the Cassegranian focus of a telescope mirror, was a circular black hole.

McKnight leaned forward, grasping the arms of his chair in a death grip, and shouted for a closeup. Had the job been done already? Perhaps Buelg had been right about there being a possible limit to the number of transformations the enemy could go through before final dissolution. After all, Badwater had just received a nuclear saturation which had previously been contemplated only in terms of the overkill of whole countries—

BUT as the glass darkened, the citadel brightened, until at last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it showed once more as a red hot ring. Nothing could be seen inside it but a roiling mass of explosions —the conventional bombardment was now getting home, and with great accuracy—from which a mushroom stem continued to rise in the very center of the millennial updraft; but the walls—the walls, the walls, the walls were still there.

"Give it up, General," Buelg said, his voice gravelly. "No matter what the spectroscope shows—if those walls were really iron—" He paused and swallowed heavily. "They must be only symbologically iron, perhaps some alchemical sense. Otherwise the atoms would not only have been scattered to the four winds, but would have had all the electron shells stripped off them. You can do nothing more."

"The bombardment is still going on," McKnight pointed out stiffly, "and we've had no report yet of what it's done to the enemy's organization and manpower. For all we know, there's nobody left down that hole at all—and the laser squadrons haven't even arrived yet, let alone the Hess torpedoes."

"Neither of which are going to work worth a damn," Baines said brutally. "I know what the Hess torpedo will do—have you forgotten that they were invented by my own chief scientist? Who just incidentally was taken by PUT SATANACHIA this Easter, so that the demons now know all about the gadget, if they didn't before."

"It is in the American tradition," McKnight said, "to do things the hard way if there is no other way. Phase Four is a last-ditch measure, and it is good generalship—which I do not expect you to understand—to remain flexible until the last moment. As Clausewitz remarks, most battles are lost by generals who failed to have the courage of their own convictions in the clutch."

Baines knew that Clausewitz had never said any such damn fool thing and that McKnight was only covering with an invented quotation a hope which was last-ditch indeed. But even had elementary Machiavellianism given him any reason to suppose that charging McKnight with this would change the general's mind in the slightest, he could see from the master screen that it was already too late. While they had been talking, the armored divisions had been charging down into the valley, their diesel-electric engines snarling and snorting, the cleats of their treads cracking the slippery glass and leaving sluggishly glowing, still quasi-molten trails behind. Watching them in the small screens, Baines began to think that he must be wrong. He knew these monsters well—they were part of his stock in trade—and to believe that they were resistible went against the selling habits of an entire adult lifetime.

Yet some of them were bogging down already; as they descended deeper into the valley, with the small rockets whistling over their hunched heads the hot glass under their treads worked into the joints like glue, and then, carried by the groaning engines up over the top trunnions, cooled and fell into the bearings in a shower of many-sized abrasive granules. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monsters slewed and sidled, losing traction and with it, steerage; and then the lead halftrack with the laser cannon jammed immovably and began to sink like the *Titanic* into the glass, the screams of its broiling crew tearing the cool air of the command booth like a ripsaw until McKnight impatiently cut off the sound.

The other beasts lumbered on regardless—they had no orders to do otherwise—and a view from the air showed that three or four units of the laser squadron were now within striking distance of the gates of Dis. Like driver ants, black streams of infantry were crawling down the inner sides of the mountains behind the last wave of the armored divisions. They, too, had had no orders to turn back. Even in their immensely clumsy asbestos firemen's suits and helmets, they were already fainting and falling over each other in the foothills, their carefully oiled automatic weapons falling into the sand, the tanks of their flame-throwers splitting and dumping jellied gasoline on the hot rocks, the very air of the valley sucking all of the moisture out of their lungs through the tiniest cracks in their uniforms.

Baines was not easily horrified—that would have been bad for business—but also he had never before seen any actual combat but the snippets of the Vietnam war which had been shown on American television. This senseless advance of expensively trained and equipped men to certain and complete slaughter—men who as usual not only had no idea of what they were dying for but had been actively misled about it—made about as much military sense as the Siege of Sevastapol or the Battle of the Marne. Certainly it was spectacular but intellectually it was not even very interesting.

FOUR of the laser buggies—all that had survived—were now halted before the gates, two to each side to allow a heavy howitzer to fire between them. From them lanced out four pencil-thin beams of intensely pure red light, all of which met at the same spot on the almost invisible seam between the glowing doors. Had that barrier been real iron, they would have holed through it in a matter of seconds in a tremendous shower of sparks, but in actuality they were not even raising its temperature, as far as Baines could see. The beams struck again.

Above the buggies, on the barbican, there seemed to be scores of black, indistinct, misshapen figures. They were very active, but their action did not seem to be directed against the buggies; Baines had the mad impression, which he was afraid was all too accurate, that they were dancing.

Again the beams lashed out. Beside him, McKnight muttered, "If they don't hurry it up—"

Even before he was able to finish the sentence, the ground in front of the gates erupted. The first of the Hess torpedoes had arrived. One of the half-tracks simply vanished, while the one next to it went slowly skyward, and as slowly fell back, in a fountain of armor plate, small parts, and human limbs and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

torsos. Another, on the very edge of the crater, toppled equally slowly into it. The fourth sat for a long minute as if stunned by the concussion, and they began to back slowly away.

Another torpedo went off directly under the gates, and then another. The gates remained obdurately unharmed, but after a fourth such blast, light could be seen under them—the crater was growing.

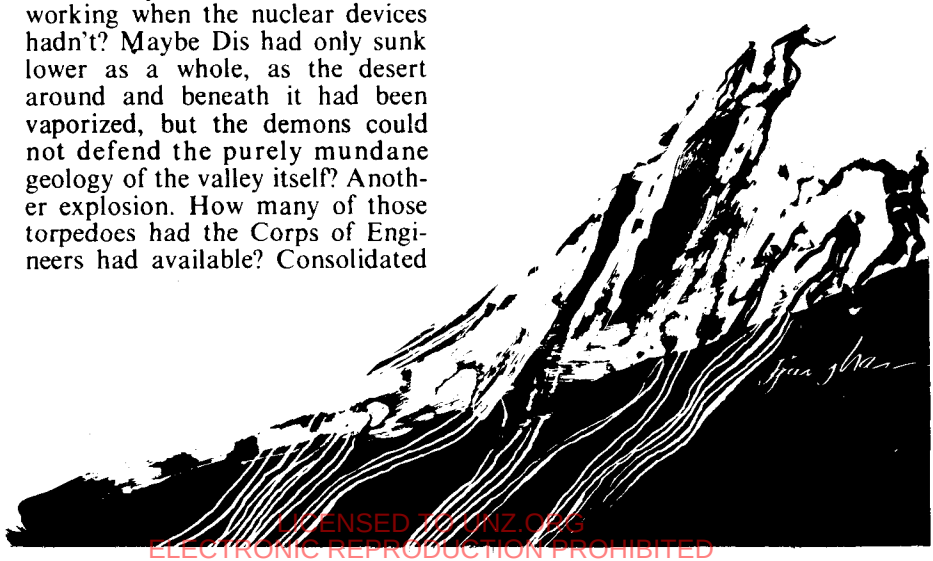
"Halt all armored vehicles!" McKnight shouted into his intercom, pounding the arm of his chair in excitement. "Infantry advance on the double! We're going under!"

Another Hess torpedo went off in the same gap. Baines was fascinated now, and even feeling a faint glow of pride. Really, the things worked very well indeed; too bad Hess couldn't be here to see it—but maybe he was seeing it, from inside. That hole was already big enough to accommodate a small car, and while he watched, another torpedo blew it still wider.

"Paratroops! Advance drop by ten minutes!"

But why was Hess' invention working when the nuclear devices hadn't? Maybe Dis had only sunk lower as a whole, as the desert around and beneath it had been vaporized, but the demons could not defend the purely mundane geology of the valley itself? Another explosion. How many of those torpedoes had the Corps of Engineers had available? Consolidated Warfare Service had supplied only ten prototypes with the plans at the time of the sale, and there hadn't been time to put more into production. McKnight's suddenly advanced timetable seemed nevertheless to be allowing for all ten.

This proved to be the case, except that the ninth got caught in a fault before it had completed its burrowing and blew up in the middle of one of the advancing columns of troops. Hess had always frankly admitted that the machine would be subject to this kind of failure, and that the flaw was inherent in the principle rather than the design. But it probably wouldn't be missed; the gap under the gates of Dis now looked quite as big as the New Jersey entrance to the original two Lincoln Tunnels. And the infantry was arriving at speed.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And at that moment, the vast unscarred gates slowly began to swing inward. McKnight gaped in astonishment, and Baines could feel his own jaw dropping. Was the citadel going to surrender before it had even been properly stormed? or, worse, had it been ready all along to open to the first polite knock, so that all this colossal effort had been unnecessary?

But the humiliation at least they were spared. As the first patrols charged, tumbled, scrambled and clambered into the crater, there appeared in the now fully opened gateway, silhouetted against the murky flames behind,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the same three huge naked snaky-haired women McKnight and his crew had seen in the very first aerial photographs. They were all three carrying among them what appeared to be the head of an immense decapitated statue of something much like one of themselves. The asbestos-clad soldiers climbing up the far wall of the crater could not turn any grayer than they were, but they froze instantaneously like the overwhelmed inhabitants of Pompeii, and fell, and as they fell, they broke. Within minutes, the pit was being refilled from the bottom with shattered sculpture.

OVERHEAD, the plane carrying the first contingent of paratroops was suddenly blurred by hundreds of tiny black dots. Seconds later the fuselage alone was plunging toward the desert; the legions of BAALZEBUB, the Lord of the Flies, had torn the wings off men. Lower, in the middle of the air, rocket-borne Assault Infantry soldiers were being plucked first of their harness, then of their clothing, and then of their hair, their fingernails and toenails by jeering creatures with beasts' heads, most of whom were flying without even wings. The bodies, when there was anything left of them at all, were being dropped unerringly into the Pit.

In summary, the Siege of Dis could more reasonably be described as a rout, except for one curious discrepancy: When Phase Four began—without anyone's ordering it, and otherwise not according to plan—the demons failed to follow up their advantage. None of them, in fact, had ever left the city; even when they had taken to the air, they had never crossed its perimeter, as though the moat represented some absolute boundary which ascended even into the sky.

And at the end, there formed upon the master screen in the Denver cavern, superimposed upon the image of the burning, triumphant city, an immense Face. Baines knew it well; he had been expecting to see it again ever since the end of that Black Easter back in Positano.

It was the crowned goat's-head of PUT SATANACHIA.

McKnight gasped in horror for the very first time in Baines' memory; and down on the floor of the control center, several generals fainted outright at their consoles. Then McKnight was on his feet, screaming.

"A Chink! I knew it all along! Hay, clear the circuits! Clear the circuits! Get him off the screen!" He rounded suddenly on Baines. "And you, you traitor! Your equipment failed us! You've sold us out! You were on their side all the time! Do you know into whose hands you have delivered your country? Do you? Do you?"

His howling was only an irritant now, but Baines had left the strength to raise one mocking eyebrow questioningly. McKnight leveled a trembling finger at the screen.

"Hay, Hay, clear the circuits! I'll have you court-martialed! Doesn't anyone understand but me? *That is the insidious Doctor Fu Manchu!*"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Sabbath Goat paid him no heed. Instead, it looked directly and steadily across the cavern into Baines' eyes. There was no mistaking the direction of that regard.

AH, THERE YOU ARE, MY DEARLY BELOVED SON. COME TO ME NOW. OUR FATHER BELOW HATH NEED OF THEE.

Baines had no intention whatsoever of obeying that summons; but he found himself rising from his chair all the same.

Foaming at the mouth, his hands clawing for the distant throat of the demon, McKnight plunged in a shower of splinters through the front of the booth and fell like a glass comet toward the floor.

XI

BAINES did not have much time to experiment under the geas or compulsion which PUT SATANACHIA had laid upon him, but he nevertheless found that it was highly selective in character. For example, the great prince had said nothing about requiring the presence of Jack Ginsberg, but when Baines, in a mixture of vindictiveness and a simple desire for human companionship, decided to try to bring him along, he found that he was not prevented from doing so. Ginsberg himself showed no resentment at being routed out of the bed of the blond runner possibly the succubus in Positano had spoiled for him the pleasures of human women, an outcome Jack himself had suspected in advance; but then, even without that supernatural congress, Jack's sexual life had always been that of a rather standard Don Juan, for whom every success turned sour.

This, however, was one of those explanations which did not explain, and Baines had thought about it often before; for, as has already been observed, he liked to have his key men come equipped with handles he could grasp if the need arose. There were, the company psychologist had told him, at least three kinds of Don Juans: Freud's, whose career is a lifelong battle to hide from himself an incipient homosexuality; Lenau's, a Romantic in search of the Ideal Woman, for whom the Devil who comes for him is disgust with himself; and da Ponte's, a man born blind to the imminence of tomorrow, and hence incapable either of love or of repentance, even on the edge of the Pit. Well, but in the end, for Baines, it did not matter which one was Jack; they all *behaved* alike.

Jack did object powerfully when he was told that the journey to Dis would have to be made entirely on foot, but this was one of the areas in which Baines discovered that the geas left him no choice. Again he wondered why it should be so. Did the Sabbath Goat mean to rub in the fact that the Siege of Dis had been the last gasp of secular technology? Or had it instead meant to impress upon Baines that, willy-nilly, he was about to embark upon a pilgrimage?

As for Jack, he still seemed to be afraid of his boss, or else still thought there was some main chance to be looked out for. Well,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perhaps there was—but Baines would not have bet any shares of stock on it.

THERON WARE saw the great compound mushroom cloud go up while he was still in Flagstaff, a point to which several lucky hitchhikes and one even luckier long freight train ride had brought him. The surging growth of the cloud, the immense flares of light beyond the mountains to the west and the repeated earth shocks left him in little doubt about what was going on; and as the cloud drifted toward him, moving inexorably from west to east as the weather usually does, he knew that it meant death for him within a very few days—as for how many thousands of others?—unless by some miracle he could find an unoccupied fallout shelter, or one whose present occupants wouldn't shoot him on sight.

And why indeed go on? The bombing showed without question that Baines' self-assumed mission to McKnight at Denver had failed, and that there was now open warfare between humanity and the demons. The notion that Theron Ware could do anything now to change that was so grandiose as to be outright pathetic. More trivially, by the time that bombing was over, no matter how it affected the demons—if at all—the whole hundred-mile-plus stretch of Death Valley National Monument would have become instantly lethal for an unprotected man to enter.

Yet Theron Ware could not yet quite believe that he was unprotected. He had come an immense distance by a traditional means which made it absolutely clear that black magic still worked; he had come almost an equal distance through a series of lucky breaks which he could not regard as the product of pure chance; and in his pocket, the ruby talisman continued to emit a faint warmth which was that of no ordinary stone, natural or synthetic. Like all proverbs, Ware knew, the old saw that the Devil looks after his own was only half true; nevertheless the feeling that he had come all this way on some errand continued to persist, together with a growing conviction that he had never in fact known what it was. He would find out when he arrived; in the meantime he was traveling on the Devil's business and would not die until it was concluded.

He would have liked to have stopped over in Flagstaff to inspect the famous observatory where Percival Lowell had produced such complicated maps of the wholly illusory canals of Mars and where Tombaugh had discovered Pluto—and where in the sky did those planets stand now that their gods had clashed frontally?—but under the circumstances he did not dare. He still had Grand Canyon and the Lake Mead area to cross; then, skirting northward around the Spring Mountains to the winter resort town of Death Valley, in which he hoped to be able to get some word about exactly where in the valley proper the perimeter of Nether Hell had surfaced. Now at last had come the time he had foreseen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the doomed farmhouse in Pennsylvania, when he would have to steal a car. He did not think that it would be difficult.

FR. DOMENICO, too, had come far and had equally good reasons to be quite certain that he would still have been in Italy, had it not been for some kind of supernatural intervention. He stood now at dusk in the shadow of the 11,000-foot Telescope Peak, looking eastward and downward to where the city of Dis flamed sullenly in the shadow of the valley of death itself against the stark backdrop of the Amargosa Range.

And he was equally certain of supernatural protection. The valley had held the world's second-ranking heat record of 134° F., but although it was immensely hotter than that down here now, Fr. Domenico felt only a mild glow, as though he had just stepped out of a bath. When he had first come down from the mountain he had been horrified to find the vitrified desert washing the foothills scattered with hundreds of strange, silent, misshapen gray forms, only vaguely human at first sight, which had proven to be stricken soldiers. He had tried to minister to them, but the attempt had proven hopeless: of the bodies in the few suits he was able to investigate, most were shrunken mummies, and the rest had apparently died even more horribly. He wondered what on Earth could have happened here. His elevation from the waters to the mountain had taken place in a mystic rapture without which, indeed, it would have been impossible, but which had taken him rather out of touch with mundane events.

But whatever the answer, he had no choice but to press on. As he descended the last of the foothills, he saw on the floor of the valley, approaching him along what had once been the old watercourse and more recently a modern road, three tiny figures. Insofar as he could tell at this distance, they wore no more visible, Earthy protections against what the valley had become than he did himself. Yet they did not seem to be demons. Full of wonder, he scrambled down toward them; but when they met and he recognized them, he wondered only that he should have been at all amazed. The meeting, he saw instantly now, had been foreordained.

"HOW did *you* get here?" Baines demanded at once. It was not easy to determine of whom he was asking the question, but while Fr. Domenico wondered whether it was worth while trying to explain trance levitation, and if so how he would go about it, Theron Ware spoke.

"I can't think of a more trivial question under the circumstances, Doctor Baines. We're here, that's the important thing—and I perceive that we are all under some kind of magical aegis, or we would all be dead. This raises the question of what we hope to accomplish, that we should be so protected. Father, may I ask what your intentions are?"

"Nothing prevents you from asking," Fr. Domenico said, "but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you are the last human being in the world to whom I would give the answer."

"Well, I'll tell you what *my* intentions are," said Baines. "My intentions are to stay in the bottommost levels of Denver and wait for this all to blow over, of it's ever going to. One thing you learn fast in the munitions business is that it's a very good idea to stay off battlefields. But my intentions have nothing to do with the matter. I was ordered to come here by the Sabbath Goat, and here I am."

"Oh?" Ware said with interest. "He finally came for you?"

"No, I have to come to him. He broke into a closed-circuit television transmission in Denver to tell me so. He didn't even mention Jack; I only brought him along for the company, since it didn't turn out to be forbidden."

"And small thanks for that," Ginsberg said, though apparently without rancor. "If there's anything in the world that I hate, it's exercise. Vertical exercise, anyhow."

"Have either of you two seen him at all?" Baines added.

Fr. Domenico remained stubbornly silent but Ware said: "PUT SATANACHIA? No, and somehow I doubt that I will, now. I seem to have put myself under the protection of another demon, although one subordinate to the Goat. Confusion of purpose is almost the natural state among demons, but in this instance I think it couldn't have happened without direct Satanic intent."

"I was given my marching orders in the name of 'Our Father below,'" Baines said. "If he's interested in me, the chances are that he's even more interested in you, all right. But what did you think you were up to?"

"Originally I thought I might try to intercede, or at least to plead for some sort of cease-fire —as you were trying to do from the opposite end in Denver. But that's a dead letter now, and the result is that I have no more idea why I am here than you do. All I can say is that whatever the reason, I don't think there can be much hope in it."

"While we live, there is always hope," Fr. Domenico said suddenly.

The black magican pointed at the tremendous City, toward which, volitionlessly, they had been continuing to walk all this time. "To be able to see *that* at all means that we have already passed far beyond mere futility. All the sins of the Leopard, the sins of incontinence, are behind us, which means that the gate is behind us too: the gate upon which it is carven in Dirghic: Lay Down All Hope, You That Go In By Me."

"We are alive," Fr. Domencio said stolidly, "and I utterly deny and repudiate those sins."

"You may not do so," Ware said, his voice gradually rising in intensity. "Look here, Father, this is all so mysterious, and the future looks so black, that it's ridiculous for us not to make available and to make use of any little scraps of information that we may have to share. The very symbolism of our presence here is simple, pat-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ent and ineluctable, and you as a Karcist in white magic should be the first to see it. To take the circles of Upper Hell in order, Ginsberg here is almost a type creation of the lust-dominated man; I have sold my soul for unlimited knowledge, which in the last analysis is surely nothing more than an instance of gluttony; and you have only to look around this battlefield to see that Doctor Baines is an instrument of wrath *par excellence*."

"You have skipped the Fourth Circle," Fr. Domenico said, "with obvious didactic intent, but your arrogance is wasted upon me. I draw no moral from it."

"Oh, indeed? Wasn't treasure-finding once the chiefest use of white magic? And isn't the monkish life—withdrawal from the snares, affairs *and duties* of the world for the sake of one's own soul—as plain a case of hoarding as one could ask for? It is in fact so egregious an example of that very sin that not even canonization remits it; I can tell you of my own certain knowledge that every single pillar-saint went instantly to Hell, and of even the simple monks, none escaped except those few like Matthew Paris and Roger of Wendover who also lead useful worldly lives.

"And regardless of what your fatuous friends on Monte Albano believed, there is no efficacious dispensation for the practice of white magic, because there is no such thing as white magic. It is all black, black, black as the ace of shades, and you have imperiled your immortal soul by practicing it not even for your own benefit, but on commission for others; if that does not make you a spendthrift as well as a hoarder, what would you call it? Really, Father Domenico, I think the time has come for us to be frank with each other—for you as surely as for the rest of us!"

"Hear, hear," Baines said with rather a sick grin.

After six or seven paces of silence Fr. Domenico said, "I am terribly afraid you are right. I came here in the hope of forcing the demons to admit that God still lives and I saw what I thought were indisputable signs of Divine sponsorship. Unless you are simply more subtle a casuist than any I have ever encountered before, even in print, it now appears that I had no right to think any such thing. . . which means that the real reason for my presence here is no less mysterious than that for yours. I cannot say that this increases my understanding any."

"It establishes a common ignorance," said Ware. "And as far as your original assumption is concerned, Father, it suggests some basic uniformity of purpose which I must admit is certainly not characteristic of demons, whatever that may mean. But I think we shall not have long to wait for the answer, gentlemen. It appears that we have arrived."

They all looked up. The colossal barbican of Dis loomed over them.

"One thing is surely clear," Fr. Domenico whispered. "We have been making this journey all our lives."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

XII

NO BEATRICE sponsored them and no Virgil led them; but as they approached the great ward, the undamaged porticullis rose and the gates swung inward in massive silence. No demons mocked them, no Furies challenged them, no angel had to cross the Styx to bring them passage; they were admitted, simply and noncommitally

Beyond the barbican, they found the citadel transformed. The Nether Hell of diuturnal torture, which had withstood the bombardment of Man without damage to so much as a twig in the Wood of the Suicides, was gone entirely. Perhaps in some sense it had never been there at all, but was still located where it had always been, in Eternity, not on Earth; a place still reserved for the dead. For these four still-living men, it had vanished.

In its place, there stood a clean, well-lighted city like an illustration from some Utopian romance; it looked, in fact, like a cross between the city of the future in the old film *Things to Come* and a full automated machine shop. It screamed, hammered and roared like a machine shop as well

The grossly misshapen, semibestial forms of the demons had also vanished. The metropolis instead appeared to be peopled now chiefly by human beings, although their appearance could scarcely be described as normal. Male and female alike, they were strikingly beautiful; but their beauty swiftly became cloying, for except for sexual characteristics they were completely identical, as though they were all members of the same clone—one which had been genetically selected out to produce creatures modeled after the statuary fronting public buildings, or the souls in the Dante illustrations of Gustav Doŕe. Both sexes wore identical skirted tabards made of some gray material which looked like papiermache, across the breasts of which long numbers had been woven in metallically glittering script

A second and much less numerous group wore a different uniform, vaguely military in cast, an impression reinforced by the fact that these were mostly to be seen standing stiffly at street intersections. Heroic in mold though the majority were, the minority were even more statuesque, and their common Face was evenly pleasant but stern, like that of an idealized father

The others wore no expression at all, unless their very expressionlessness was a reflection of acute boredom—which would not have been surprising, for no one of this class seemed to have anything to do. The work of the metropolis, which seemed to be exclusively that of producing that continual, colossal din, went on behind the blank facades apparently without need of any sentient tending or intervention. They never spoke. As the four pilgrims moved onward toward the center of the city, they passed frequent exhibitions of open, public sexuality, more often than not in groups; at first

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jack Ginsberg regarded these with the liveliest interest, but it soon faded as it became apparent that even this was bored and pleasureless.

There were no children; and no animals

INITIALLY the travelers had hesitated, when the two magicians had discovered that with the transformation they could no longer trust to Dante to show them the way, and Baines' memory of the aerial photographs had become similarly useless. They had proceeded more or less by instinct toward the center of the din. After a while, however, they found that they had been silently joined by four of the policing demons, though whether they were being led or herded never did become clear. The grimly ambiguous escort heightened the impression of a guided tour of some late Nineteenth Century world-of-tomorrow which was to include awe-inspiring visits to the balloon works, the creches, the giant telegraph center and the palace of fold arts, only to wind up in a corrective discipline hospital for the antisocial.

It was as though they were being given a preview of what the future of humanity would be like under demonic rule—not only wholly unpredictable as a foretaste, but in content as well, as if the demons were trying to put the best possible face on the matter. In so doing, they had ingeniously embodied in their citadel nothing worse than a summary and epitomization of what pre-Apocalyptic, post-industrial Man had been systematically creating for himself. St. Augustine, Goethe and Milton all had observed that the Devil, by constantly seeking evil, always did good, but here was an inversion of that happy fault: A demonstration that demons are at their worst when doing their best.

Many of Baines' most lucrative ideas for weaponry had been stolen bodily, through the intermediary of the Mamaroneck Research Institute, from the unpaid imaginations of science-fiction writers, and it was he who first gave voice to the thought:

"I always thought it'd be hell to actually have to live in a place like this," he shouted. "And now I know it."

Nobody answered him; but it was more than possible that this was because nobody had heard him.

But only the veritable Hell is forever. After some unknown but finite time, they found themselves passing between the Doric columns and under the golden architrave of that high capitol which is called Pandemonium, and the brazen doors folded open for them.

Inside, the clamor was muffled to a veiled and hollow booming, for the vast jousting-field that was this hall had been made to hold the swarming audience for a panel of a thousand, but there was no one in it now besides themselves and the demon soldiers but one solitary, distant, intolerable star:

not that subsidiary triumvir PUT SATANACHIA, the Sab-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bath Goat who had promised himself to them, and they to him, on Black Easter morn;

but that archetypical dropout, the Lie that knows no End, the primeval Parent-sponsored Rebel, the Eternal Enemy, the Great Nothing itself

SATAN MEKRATIG

There was, of course, no more Death Valley sunlight here and the effect of an implacably ultramodern city with its artificial gas glow glare was also gone. But the darkness was not quite complete. A few cressets hung blazing high in mid-air, so few that their light was spread evenly throughout the great arch of the ceiling, like the artificial sky of a planetarium dome simulating that moment between dusk and full night when only Lucifer is bright enough to be visible. Toward that glow they moved, and as they moved, it grew

But the creature, they saw at last, was not the light, which shone instead upon him. The fallen cherub below it was still very nearly the same immense, brooding, cruelly deformed angelic image that Dante had seen and Milton imagined: triple-faced in yellow, red and black, bat-winged, shag-pelted, and so huge that the floor of the great hall cut him off at the breast—he must have measured five hundred yards from crown to hoof. Like the eyes, the wings were six, but they no longer beat frenziedly to stir the three winds that froze Cocytus; nor now did the six eyes weep. Instead, each of the faces—the Semitic Ignorance, the Japhetic Hatred, the Hamitic Impotence—was frozen in an expression of despair too absolute for further grief

The pilgrims saw these things, but only with half an eye, for their attention was focused instead upon the light which both revealed and shadowed them:

The terrible crowned head of the Worm was surmounted by a halo.

XIII

THE demonic guards had not followed them in, and the great Figure was motionless and uttered no orders; but in that hollowly roaring silence the pilgrims felt compelled to speak. They looked at each other almost shyly, like school children brought to be introduced to some king or president, each wanting to be bold enough to draw attention himself, but waiting for someone else to break the ice. Again nothing was said, but somehow agreement was arrived at: Fr. Domenico should speak first.

Looking aloft, but not quite into those awful countenances, the white monk said, "Father of Lies, I thought it was my mission to come here and compel thee to speak the truth. I arrived as if by miracle, or borne by faith; and in my journeyings saw many evidences that the rule of Hell on Earth is not complete. Nor has that Goat your prince yet come for me, or for my. . .colleagues here, despite his threat and promise. Then I also saw the election of your demon Pope, the very Anti-Christ that PUT SATANA-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHIA said had been dispensed with, as unnecessary to a victorious demonry. I concluded then that God was not dead after all, and someone should come into thy city to assert His continuing authority.

"I stand before thee impotent—my very crucifix was shattered in my hands on Black Easter morning—but nevertheless I charge thee and demand that thou shalt state thy limitations and abide the course to which they hold thee."

There was no answer. After a long wait made it clear that there was not going to be, Theron Ware said next:

"Master, thou knowest me well, I think: I am the last black magician in the world and the most potent ever to practice that high art. I have seen signs and wonders much resembling those mentioned by Father Domenico but draw from them rather different conclusions. Instead, it seems to me that the final conflict with Michael and all his host cannot be over yet—despite the obvious fact that thou hast won vast advantages already. And if this is true, then it is perhaps an error for thee to make war upon mankind, or for them to make war on thee, with the greater issue still in doubt. Since thou are still granting some of us some favors of magic, there must still exist some aid which we might give thee. Hence I came here to find out what that aid might be, and to proffer it, if it were within my powers."

No answer.

Baines said sullenly, "I came because I was ordered. But since I'm here, I may as well offer my opinion in the matter, which is much like Ware's. I tried to persuade the human generals not to attack the city, but I failed. Now that they've seen that it can't be attacked - and I'm sure they noticed that you didn't wipe out all of their forces when you had the chance - I might have better luck. At least I'll try again, if it's of any use to you.

"I can't imagine any way we could help you carry the war to Heaven, since we were no good against your own local fortress. And besides, I prefer to remain neutral. But getting our generals off your back might relieve you of a nuisance, if you've got more serious business still afoot. If that's not good enough, don't blame me. I didn't come here of my own free will."

The terrible silence persisted, until at last even Jack Ginsberg was forced to speak.

"If you're waiting for me, I have no suggestions," he said. "I guess I'm grateful for past favors too, but I don't understand what's going on and I didn't want to get involved. I was only doing my job, but as far as my private life goes, I'd just as soon be left to work it out by myself from now on. As far as I'm concerned, it's nobody's business but my own."

Now at last, the great wings stirred slightly; and then, the three faces spoke. There was no audible voice, but as the vast lips moved, the words formed in their minds, like sparks crawling along logs in a dying fire.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O yee of little faith, the Worm set on,
Yee whose coming fame had bodied forth
A hope archchemic even to this Deep
That Wee should be amerced of golden Throne,
The which to Us a rack is, by thine alchymie,
Is this thy sovran Reason? this the draff,
Are these sollicitations all the sum
And sorrie Substance of thine high renoune?
Art thou accomplisht to so mean an end
After such journeyings of flame and dole
As once strook doun Heav'n's angels? Say it so,
In prosie speach or numerous prosodie,
Wee will not be deceav'd; so much the rather
Shall Wee see yee rased from off the bord
'Twixt Hell and Heav'n, as the fearful mariner,
Ingled by the wave 'mongst spume and rock.
Sees craft and hope alike go all to ruin,
Yet yields up not his soul, than Wee shall yield
The last, supreme endeavour of this fearfull Jarr.
Yet how to body forth to thy blind eyes,
Who have not poets' blindnesse, or the night
Shed by black suns, 'thought which to tell the tale
Of Earth its occupation by the demon breed
Is sole remaining hearth, but to begin?
O 'suaging Night, console Mee now! and hold
My Demy-godhood but a little while
Abeyanc'd from its death in Godhood's dawn!
O yee of little faith, Wee tell thee this:
Indeed our God is dead; or dead to us.
But in some depth of measure beyond grasp
Remains His principle, as doth the sight
Of drowsy horoscoper, much bemus'd
By vastnesses celestial and horrid
To his tinie system, when he looks first
Through the optic glass at double stars,
Some residuum apprehend; so do we now.
O happie matrix! for there is naught else
That all are left with. It in this inheres,
That Good is independent, but the bad
Cannot alone survive; the evil Deed
Doth need the Holie Light to lend it Sense
And apprehension; for the Good is free
To act or not, while evill hath been will'd
Insensate and compulsive to bring Good
Still greater highths unto, as climber see'th,
From toil and suff'ring to th' uttermost Alp,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Best th' unattainable islands of the skye.
In this yee Sinners are in harmonie,
Antient and grand, though meanlie did yee move
About your severall ends. Since first this subject,
Thou, thaumaturgist Blacke, and thou,
O merchant peccant to the deaths of fellowe men,
Contrived in evill all thy predecessors human,
But save Judas I was wont to gnaw before,
T' outdo, by willingnesse to plunge
All mankind in a night's Abysse
Only for perverse aesthetick Joye
And Thrill of Masterie, there then ensu'd
That universall Warr in which the victorie
Hath faln to Hellish host, so Wee rejoyc'd;
Yet hold! for once releas'd from Paynes
Decreed to be forever, all our Band
Of demons foul, who once were angels bright
Conceiv'd in simpler time and ever since
Entomb'd amidst the horrors of the Pit,
Did find the world of men so much more foul
E'en than in the fabulous reign of witches
That all bewilder'd fell they and amazed.
Yet after hastie consult, they set to,
To preach and practise evill with all pow'r,
Adhering to grounded rules long understood,
A Greshamite oeconomium.
But eftsoons
That vacuous space where once Eternall Good
Had dwelt demanded to be filled. Though God
Be dead, His Throne remains. And so below
As 'twas above, last shall be first, and Wee,
Who by the Essenes' rule are qualified
Beyond all remaining others, must become
In all protesting agonie—the chief
Of powers for Good in all the Universe
Uncircumscribed; but let yee not forget,
Already Good compared to such as thee,
Whose evill remains will'd! And as for Us,
What doth it matter what Wee most desire?
While chained in the Pit, Wee were condemn'd
To be eternall, but paroll'd to Earth
Were once more caught by Change; and how
Could Wickednesse Incorporeal grow still worse?
And so, behold! Wee are a God.
But not
Perhaps The God. Wee do not know the end.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Perhaps indeed Jehovah is not dead,
But mere retir'd, withdrawn or otherwise
Contracted hath, as Zohar *subtle saith,*
His Essence Infinite; and, Epicurean, waits
The outcome vast with vast indifference.
Yet natheless His universe requires
That all things changing must tend t'ward His state.
If, then, Wee must proclaim His Rôle historic
Abandon'd in Deific suicide,
Why this felo de Se *except to force*
That part of Man— who fail'd it out of hand?
Now, as Wee sought to be in the Beginning,
SATAN is God; and in Mine agonie
More just a God and a wrathfuller by far
Than He Who thunder'd down on Israel!
Yet not for ever, though our rule will seem
For ever. Man, O Man, I beg of you,
Take, O take from mee this Cup away!
I cannot bear it. You, and onely you,
You alone, alone can God become,
As always He intended. This downfall
Our mutual Armageddon here below
Is punishment dire enough, but for your Kinde
A worse awaits; for you must rear yourselves
As ready for the Resurrection. I
Have slammed that door behind; yours is to come.
On that far future Day, I shall be there.
The burning Keys to put into your hands.
I, SATAN MEKRATIG, can no longer bear
This deepest, last and bitterest of all
My fell damnations: That at last I know
I never wanted to be God at all;
And so, by winning all, All have I lost.

(The great hall of Pandemonium dissolves, and with it the Citadel of Dis, leaving the four men standing in a modern road in the midst of the small town of Badwater. It is early morning in the desert, and still cold. All traces of the recent battle also have vanished.

(The four look at each other, with gradually growing wonder, as though each were seeing the others for the first time. Each one finally starts a sentence, but is unable to complete it):

FR. DOMENICO: I think. . . .

BAINES: I believe. . .

WARE: I hope. . . .

(They look about, noting the disappearance of the battlefield. After all else that has happened, they do not question this.

GINSBERG: I. . . love. ★

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ABOUT A SECRET CROCODILE

R.A. LAFFERTY

THERE is a secret society of seven men that controls the finances of the world. This is known to everyone but the details are not known. There are some who believe that it would be better if one of those seven men were a financier.

There is a secret society of three men and four women that controls all the fashions of the world. The details of this are known to all who are in the fashion. And I am not.

There is a secret society of nineteen men that is behind all the fascist organizations in the world. The secret name of this society is Glomerule.

There is a secret society of thirteen persons known as the Elders of Edom that controls all the secret sources of the world. That the sources have become muddy is of concern to them.

There is a secret society of only four persons that manufactures all the jokes of the world. One of these persons is unfunny and he is responsible for all the unfunny jokes.

There is a secret society of eleven persons that is behind all Bol-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shevik and atheist societies of the world. The devil himself is a member of this society, and he works tirelessly to become a principal member. The secret name of this society is Ocean.

There are related secret societies known as The Path of the Serpent (all its members have the inner eyelid of snakes), The Darkbearers, the Seeing Eye, Imperium, The Golden Mask and the City.

Above most of these in a queer network there is a society that controls the attitudes and dispositions of the world—and the name of it is Crocodile. The Crocodile is insatiable: it eats persons and nations alive. And the Crocodile is very old, 8809 years old by one account, 7349 years old if you use the short chronology.

There are subsecret societies within the Crocodile: the Cocked Eye, the Cryptic Cootie and others. Powerful among these is a society of three hundred and ninety-nine persons that manufactures all the catchwords and slogans of the world. This subsociety is not completely secret since several of the members are mouthy: the code name of this apparatus is the Crocodile's Mouth.

Chesterton said that Mankind itself was a secret society. Whether it would be better or worse if the secret should ever come out he did not say.

And finally there was—for a short disruptive moment—a secret society of three persons that controlled all.

All what?

Bear with us. That is what this account is about.

JOHN CANDOR had been called into the office of Mr. James Dandi at ABNC. (Whisper, whisper, for your own good, do not call him Jim Dandy; that is a familiarity he will not abide.)

"This is the problem, John," Mr. Dandi stated piercingly, "and we may as well put it into words. After all, putting things into words and pictures is our way of working at ABNC. Now then, what do we do at ABNC, John?"

(ABNC was one of the most powerful salivators of the Crocodile's Mouth.)

"We create images and attitudes, Mr. Dandi."

"That is correct, John," Mr. Dandi said. "Let us never forget it. Now something has gone wrong. There is a shadowy attack on us that may well be the most damaging thing since the old transgression of Spirochaete himself. Why has something gone wrong with our operation, John?"

"Sir, I don't know."

"Well then, what has gone wrong?"

"What has gone wrong, Mr. Dandi, is that it isn't working the way it should. We are caught on our own catchwords, we are slaughtered by our own slogans.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There are boomerangs whizzing about our ears from every angle. None of it goes over the way it is supposed to. It all twists wrong for us."

"Well, what is causing this? Why are our effects being nullified?"

"Sir, I believe that somebody else is also busy creating images and attitudes. Our catechesis states that this is impossible since we are the only group permitted in the field. Nevertheless, I am sure that someone else is building these things against us. It even seems that they are more powerful than we are—and they are unknown."

"They cannot be more powerful than we are—and they must not remain unknown to us." Mr. Dandi's words stabbed. "Find out who they are, John."

"How?"

"If I knew how, John, I would be working for you, not you working for me. Your job is to do things. Mine is the much more difficult one of telling you to do them. Find out, John."

JOHN CANDOR went to work on the problem. He considered whether it was a linear, a set or a group problem. If it were a linear problem he should have been able to solve it by himself—and he couldn't. If it were a set problem, then it couldn't be solved at all. Of necessity he classified it as a group problem and he assembled a group to solve it. This was easy at ABNC which had more group talent than anybody.

The group that John Candor assembled was made up of August Crayfish, Sterling Groshawk, Maurice Cree, Nancy Peters, Tony Rover, Morgan Aye, and Betty McCraken. Tell the truth, would you be able to gather so talented a group in your own organization?

"My good people," John Candor said, "as we all know, something has gone very wrong with our effects. It must be righted. Thoughts, please, thoughts!"

"We inflate a person or subject and he bursts on us," August gave his thought. "Are we using the wrong gas?"

"We launch a phrase and it turns into a joke," Sterling complained. "Yet we have not slighted the check-off: it has always been examined from every angle to be sure that it doesn't have a joker context. But something goes wrong."

"We build an attitude carefully from the ground up," Maurice stated. "Then our firm ground turns boggy and the thing tilts and begins to sink."

"Our 'Fruitful Misunderstandings,' the most subtle and effective of our current devices, are beginning to bear sour fruit," Nancy said.

"We set ourselves to cut a man down and our daggers turn to rubber," Tony Rover moaned. (Oh,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were there ever sadder words? 'Our daggers have turned to rubber.)

"Things have become so shaky that we're not sure whether we are talking about free or closed variables," Morgan gave his thought.

"How can my own loving mother make such atrocious sandwiches?" Betty McCracken munched distastefully. Betty, who was underpaid, was a brown-sack girl who brought her own lunch. "This is worse than usual." She chewed on. "The only thing to do with it is feed it to the computer." She fed it to the computer which ate it with evident pleasure.

"Seven persons, seven thoughts," John Candor mused.

"Seven persons, six thoughts," Nancy Peters spat bitterly. "Betty, as usual, has contributed nothing."

"Only the first stage of the answer," John Candor said. "She said 'The only thing to do with it is to feed it to the computer.' Feed the problem to the computer, folks."

They fed the problem to the computer by pieces and by wholes. The machine was familiar with their lingos and procedures. It was acquainted with the Non-Valid Context Problems of Morgan Aye and with the Hollow Shell Person Puzzles of Tony Rover. It knew the Pervading Environment Ploy of Maurice Cree. It knew what trick-work to operate within.

Again and again the machine asked for various kinds of supplementary exterior data.

"Leave me with it," the machine finally issued. "Assemble here again in sixty days, or hours—"

"No, we want the answers right now," John Candor insisted, "within sixty seconds."

"The second is possibly the interval I was thinking of," the machine issued. "What's time to a tin can anyhow?" It ground its data trains for a full minute.

"Well?" John Candor asked.

"Somehow I get the number three," the machine issued.

"Three what, machine?"

"Three persons," the machine issued. "They are unknowingly linked together to manufacture attitudes. They are without program or purpose or organization or remuneration or basic or malice."

"Nobody is without malice," August Crayfish insisted in a startled way. "They must be totally alien forms then. How do they manage their effects?"

"One with a gesture, one with a grimace, one with an intonation," the machine issued.

"Where are they?" John Candor demanded.

"All comparatively near." The machine drew three circles on the city map. "Each is to be found in his own circle most of the time."

"Their names?" John Candor asked and the machine wrote the name of each in the proper circle.

"Do you have anything on their appearances?" Sterling Groshawk inquired and the machine manu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

factured three kymograph pictures of the targets.

"Have you their addresses or identifying numbers?" Maurice Cree asked.

"No. I think it's remarkable of me that I was able to come up with this much," the machine issued.

"We can find them," Betty McCracken said. "We can most likely find them in the phone book."

"What worries me is that there's no malice in them," John Candor worried. "Without malice, there's no handle to get hold of a thing. The Disestablishment has been firmly established for these several hundred years and we hold it to be privileged. It must not be upset by these three randoms. We will do what we must do."

MIKE ZHESTOVITCH was a mighty man. One does not make the primordial gestures out of weak body and hands. He looked like a steel worker—or anyhow like a worker at one of the powerful trades. His torso was like a barrel but more noble than ordinary barrels. His arms and hands were hardly to be believed. His neck was for the bulls, his head was as big as a thirteen gallon firkin, his eyeballs were the size of ducks' eggs and the hair on his chest and throat was that heavy black wire-grass that defies steel plowshares. His voice—well he didn't have much of a voice—it wasn't as mighty as the rest of him.

And he didn't really work at one of the powerful trades. He was a zipper repairman at the Jiffy Nifty Dry Cleaners.

August Crayfish of ABNC located Mike Zhestovitch in the Blind Robbin Bar which (if you recall the way that block lies) is just across that short jog-alley from the Jiffy Nifty. And August recognized big Mike at once. But how did big Mike get his effects?

"The Cardinals should take the Colts today," a serious man there was saying.

"The Cardinals—" Mike Zhestovitch began in the voice that was less noble than the rest of him, but he didn't finish the sentence. As a matter of fact, big Mike had never finished a sentence in all his life. Instead he made the gesture with his mighty hands and body. Words cannot describe the gesture but it was something like balling up an idea or opinion in the giant hands and throwing it away, utterly away, over the very edge of contempt.

The Cardinals, of course, did not take the Colts that day. For a moment it was doubtful whether the Cardinals would survive at all. From the corner of the eye, red feathers could be seen drifting away in the air.

August Crayfish carefully waited a moment and watched. A man walked out of the Blind Rob-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bin and talked to another man in that little jog-alley. From their seriousness it was certain that they were talking baseball.

"The Cardinals—" the first man said after a moment, and he also made the gesture. And seconds later a man playing eight-ball in the back of the Blind Robbin did the same thing.

August was sure then. Mike Zhestovitch not only could shrivel anything with the gesture, but the gesture as he used it was highly epidemic. It would spread, according to Schoeffler's Law of Dispersal, through the city in short minutes, through the world in short hours. And no opinion could stand against its disfavor. Mike Zhestovitch could wreck images and attitudes—and possibly he could also create them.

"Do you work alone?" August Crayfish asked.

"No. The rip-fix and the button-sew girls work in the same cubby-hole," Mike said with his curiously small voice.

"Do you know a Mary Smorfia?" August asked.

"I don't, no," Mike said, a certain comprehension coming into his ducks'-egg-sized eyes. "And you are glad that I don't? Then I will. I'll find out who she is. I see it now that you are a wrong guy and she is a right girl."

Then August Crayfish spoke the slogan that would be unveiled to the ears of the world that very night, a wonderfully slippery slogan that had cost a hundred thousand dollars to construct. It should have warned Mike Zhestovitch away from his mad resistance.

Mike Zhestovitch made the gesture, and the slogan was in ruins. And somewhere the Secret Crocodile lashed its tail in displeasure.

"Do you want to make a lot of money?" August Crayfish whispered after a long reevaluation pause.

"Money—from such as you—" Big Mike didn't finish the sentence, he never did. But he made the gesture. The idea of a lot of money shriveled. And August Crayfish shriveled so small that he could not climb over the threshold of the Blind Robbin on the way out and had to be aided over it by the shod —toe of a kind man. (This last statement is a literal exaggeration but it is the right direction.)

NANCY PETERS of ABNC located Mary Smorfia in the King-Pin Bowling Alley, where she was a hamburger waitress and a beer buster. Mary was small, dark, unpretty (except for her high-frequency eyes and the beautiful gash across her face that was her mouth), lively, smart, busy, a member of that aberrant variety of the human race that was called Italian.

"Snorting Summer should take the Academy Award," one nice guzzling lady at the counter was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saying to another, "and Clover Elysée is the shoeless shoo-in for best actress of the year."

And Mary Smorfia made the grimace. Ah, it was mostly done with the beautifully large mouth and yet every part of her entered into it, from the blue lights in her hair to her crinkly toes. It was a devastating, all-destroying grimace. It gobbled up, it nullified and it made itself felt to a great distance. The nice guzzling lady had not even been looking toward Mary Smorfia but she felt the grimace like a soul shock, and she herself did the grimace with a wonderful distortion of the features that weren't made for it.

And the grimace swept everything like quick contagion or prairie fire. Snorting Summer—gah! Clover Elysée—guggling gah! Those things were finished forever, beyond laughter, below derision. And Nancy Peters of ABNC noted the powerful effect carefully, for the original words of the nice guzzling lady were the very words that ABNC had selected to be echoed a hundred million times whenever the awards were thought of.

"Do you work alone?" Nancy Peters asked Mary Smorfia.

"Kid, I am so fast they don't need anyone else on this shift. I'm like silly lightning."

"Did you ever think of becoming an actress, Mary?" Nancy asked in honey-tones.

"Oh, I made a commercial once," Mary said out of her curly gash-mouth (she had to be kidding: she couldn't really have a mouth that looked like that). "I don't know whether I sold much of my guy's soap but I bet I got a lot of people off that Brand X. Ashes it was, worse even, after I monkey-faced it. They say I'm a natural—but once is enough."

"Do you know a Mike Zhestovitch or a Clivendon Surrey?" Nancy asked.

"I don't think so," Mary said. "What league do they bowl in? I bet I will like them both, though, and I will remember their names and find them."

Nancy Peters was nervous. She felt that the annihilating grimace was about to strike again on Mary's lightning-gash mouth. But it was time for the test of strength. Nancy spoke the new slogan that had been selected for presentation to the world that very night, a wonderfully convincing and powerful slogan that should bring this random Mary Smorfia to heel if anything could. And she spoke it with all the absolute expertise of the Crocodile's Mouth behind her.

The Grimace! And the slogan was destroyed forever. And (grimacing horror turned inward) Nancy caught the contagion and was doing the grimace herself. She was quite unable to get the thing off her face.

Sheer humiliation overwhelmed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Nancy person, who had suddenly been made small. And somewhere the Secret Crocodile lashed its tail in displeasure and unease.

"Do you want to make twenty thousand dollars, Mary?" Nancy asked after she had returned from the jane where she had daubed her flushed face and cooled her flustered body.

"Twenty thousand dollars isn't very much," Mary Smorfia sounded out of her panoramic mouth. "I make eighty-eight fifty now after everything. I could make a lot more if I wanted to go along with the cruds."

"Twenty thousand dollars is very much more," Nancy Peters said enticingly.

"It is very much more cruddy, kid." Mary Smorfia grimaced. Grimaced! Not again! Nancy Peters fled in deflated panic. She felt herself dishonored forever.

Well, do you think it is all water-melon pickles and pepper relish, this unilaterally creating all the images and attitudes for the whole world? It isn't. It is a detailed and devious thing and the privileged Disestablishment had been building it for centuries. (The Establishment itself had been no more than a figure of speech for most of those centuries, a few clinging bits of bark: the heart of the tree had long been possessed by the privileged Disestablishment.) Three quick random persons could not be permitted to nullify words from the Mouth itself.

MORGAN AYE of ABNC located Clivendon Surrey in Speedsters' Café. Clivendon was a lank and fair-haired man with a sort of weariness about him, a worldliness that had to be generations old. He had the superior brow and the thoroughbred nose that isn't grown in short centuries. He had the voice, the intonation, the touch of Groton, the touch of Balliol, the strong touch of other institutions even more august. It was a marvelous voice, at least the intonation of it. Clivendon's employer once said that he didn't believe that Clivendon ever spoke in words, at least not in any words that he was ever able to understand. The intonation was really a snort, a sort of neigh, but it carried the cresting contempt of the ages in its tone. And it was contagious.

Clivendon was really of Swedish extraction and had come off a farm near Pottersville. He had developed that intonation for a role in a high-school play. He had liked it and he had kept it. Clivendon was a motorcycle mechanic at Downhillers' Garage.

"Do you work alone?" Morgan Aye asked Clivendon.

"Naeu. You work alone and you got to work. You work with a bunch and you can slip out from it," Clivendon intoned. Yes, he talked in words and the words

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could be mostly understood. But the towering intonation was the thing, the world-wilting contempt of the tone. This man was a natural and Morgan felt himself a foot shorter in the very presence of that tone.

"Do you know a Mike Zhestovitch or a Mary Smorfia?" Morgan asked fearfully.

"That's a funny thing." The tone cut through ear-wax and the soft spots of the spleen. "I had never heard of them but Mary Smorfia called me up not thirty minutes ago and said that she wanted both of us to meet Mike. So I'll meet them in about twenty minutes, as soon as the clock there says that I'm supposed to be off work at Downhillers' Garage."

"Don't meet them!" Morgan cried out violently. "That might be the closing of the link, the setting up of a league. It might be an affront to the Mouth itself."

The tone, the neigh, the snort, the sharp edge of a wordless intonation sent Morgan reeling back. And there were echoes of it throughout Speedsters' Café and in the streets outside. The tone was as contagious as it was cutting.

Morgan started to speak the newest selected slogan from the Mouth—and he stopped short. He was afraid of the test of strength. Two very expensive slogans had already been shattered today by these randoms. 'No malice in the three,' the computer had said and: 'without malice, there's no handle to get hold of a thing,' John Candor had stated. But somewhere in that mountainous and contagious contempt of tone that belonged to Clivendon Surrey had to be some malice. So Morgan Aye reached for what had always been the ultimate weapon of the Crocodile's Mouth. It always worked—it always worked if any malice at all existed in the object.

"How would you like to make five thousand dollars a week?" he whispered to Clivendon.

"What garage pays that much?" Clivendon asked in honest wonder. "I'm not that good a motorcycle mechanic."

"Five thousand dollars a week to work with us at ABNC," Morgan tempted. "We could use you in so many ways—that marvelous scorn to cut down any man we wished! You could lend the intonations of your voice to our—"

The neigh was like a thousand sea stallions breaking up from the depths. The snort was one that crumbles cliffs at the ends of the earth. Morgan Aye had gone ghastly white and his ears were bleeding from the transgression of that cutting sound. There were even some words in Clivendon's sounding—"Why, then I'd be one of the birds that picks the shreds of flesh from between the teeth of the monster." Blinding hooting contempt in the tone and Morgan Aye

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was in the street and running from it.

But the echoes of that intonation were everywhere in that part of town, soon to be all over the town, all over the world. It was an epidemic of snorting at the Crocodile's Mouth itself. Fools! Did they know that this was but one step from snorting at the very Crocodile?

THE ring had closed. The informal league had formed now. The three randoms had met and united. The Mouth was affronted. Worse than that, all the outpour of the Mouth was nullified. The whole world was rejecting the catchwords that came from the Mouth, was laughing at them, was throwing them away with the uttermost gesture, was monkey-facing them, was snorting them down, was casting them out with bottomless contempt.

This was the short reign of the secret society of three, who did not know that they were secret. But in their day they closed the Mouth down completely. It was filled with mud and swamp reeds and rotting flesh.

The Secret Crocodile was lashing its tail with acute displeasure now. The Crocodile's Mouth had become quite nervous. And what of the little birds that fly in and out of that mouth, that preen the teeth and glean scraps of flesh and slogans and catchwords there? The birds were in quite an unhappy flutter.

"There is open conspiracy against us by a secret society of three persons," Mr. James Dandi was saying, "and all the world abominates a secret society. We have this thing to do this day—to cripple it forever in its strength. Otherwise we will be cast out and broken as ineffectual instruments and the Crocodile will bring in strong persons from the Cocked Eye or the Cryptic Cootie to take our places. Surely we are not without resources. What is the logical follow-up to the Fruitful Misunderstanding?"

"The Purposive Accident," John Candor said immediately.

"Take care of it, John," Mr. James Dandi said. "Remember, though, that he whose teeth we preen is the very bowels of compassion. I believe this is the salient thing in the world in our day, the Compassion of the Crocodile."

"Take care of it, people," John Candor said to his seven talented ones, "remembering always that the Crocodile is the very belly of compassion."

"Take care of it," the seven said to the computer, "always within the context of the jaws of compassion."

The computer programed a Purposive Accident to happen and manufactured such props as were needed. And the Purposive Accident was very well programmed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was no great amount of blood poured out. No persons were killed except several uninvolved bystanders. The secret three were left alive and ambulant and scathed only at their points of strength.

It happened in the block between the Blind Robbin Bar and Speedsters' Café when all three members of the secret society happened to be walking together. The papers called it a bomb; they call everything a bomb that goes off like that. It was really a highly sophisticated homing device with a tripartite programing and it carried out its tripartite mission.

All three randoms, former members of the short-lived secret society, are well and working again. Mike Zhestovitch is no longer a zipper repair man (it takes two talented hands to fix those zippers), but he still works at the Jiffy Nifty Dry Cleaners. He runs one of those big pressers now which he can easily do with his powerful and undamaged left hand and his prosthetic right hand. But without his old right hand he can no longer make the contagious primordial gesture that once dumbfounded the Mouth and all its words. You just cannot make the big gesture with a false hand.

Mary Smorfia still works at the King-Pin Bowling Alley as hamburger waitress and beer buster. She is still small, dark, unpretty (except for her high-frequency eyes), lively, smart, and Italian. Her mouth is still a gash across her face, but now it is twice as great a gash as it used to be, and it no longer has its curled liveliness. Its mobility is all gone, it will no longer express the inexpressible, will no longer shatter a phrase or an attitude. Mary Smorfia is as she always was, except that now she is incapable of the famous grimace.

Clivendon Surrey is again a motorcycle mechanic at Downhiller's Garage and again he spends most of his time in Speedsters' Café. His vocal cords are gone, of course, but he gets by: he is able to speak with a throat microphone. But the famous intonation, the neigh, the destroying snort are all impossible for him.

The trouble is over with. Now again there is only one organization in the world to create the images and attitudes of the world. This insures that only the standard attitudes of the Disestablishment shall prevail.

IN OUR opening catalog we forgot one group. There is another secret society in the world composed of the good guys and good gals. It has no name that we have ever heard except just the Good Guys and Good Gals. At the moment this society controls nothing at all in the world. It stirs a little, though. It may move. It may collide, someday, even with the Secret Crocodile itself. ★

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COORDINATES

Adam, the primal particle on earth,
Took out his rib and found,
O angels, beware! The universe is
Made of Adam's matter.

Naturally, if there's a space outside our sky
we long to fondle or penetrate it.
As we shuffled once through deserts, or hitched
our wagons through mountain passes
So these days we saddle up our rockets
and roar off to
Assignations with the same old loves.

SOunding dolphins know the depths of
NAvigation, their ears catch all the echoes.
Ranging thermoplanes, they read those aural
shadows.

Quite a lot of energy passes
Under the galactic bridge
(**A**s far as man is concerned) before
Star clusters can radio hello
And goodbye to each other.
Retroactive greetings may be all we get.

Light comes and goes so naturally
Amplification of shapes is unnoticed.
Stimulated by the morning's recurrent
Emission of faces and trees, our bodies'
Radiation of consciousness occurs like prayer.

ENVOY

Don't
Negate
Adam

SONYA DORMAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POWER PLAY

DANNIE PLACHTA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DR. WANG turned his Oriental eyes from the violent colors of the parasol.

"It's clean, all right, I even tested for sugar."

He smiled a quiet smile at his quiet joke.

"Then we're all in agreement that it's a plain, rather ordinary umbrella," said the chairman, "aside from its somewhat unique coloring."

"Within the observational limitations of our tests," amended Dr. Werthmann.

"Can the applesauce," said Dr. Longstead. "It's a common bumbershoot. Period."

The old physicist jammed his ragged cigar back into his mouth and slapped the table top with a wrinkled hand.

A light knock came at the door and the chairman rose from the long hardwood table. At his invitation a modishly attired, middle-aged woman entered the room and seated herself at the head of the table.

Introductions were offered. Mrs. Smith smiled at the chairman and the Doctors Wang, Werthman, Longstead, Carpenter, and Brown.

After a minimal exchange of small talk Mrs. Smith answered several pertinent questions. She explained that she had always had a parlor interest in extrasensory phenomena and that she had never really noted any psychic abilities of her own prior to her experiences with the psychedelic parasol. The parasol had been bought from a Greenwich Village stand. It had been a very sunny day and she had nearly fainted during a mass protest rally at Washington Square. No, she couldn't remember what the protest was against but the event had occurred about two months ago and the parasol had probably saved her from sunstroke. And, yes, she could control the parasol's movements with the power of her mind. She had, in fact, done so on at least a hundred separate occasions.

Following a careful search of Mrs. Smith's person, which she seemed more than willing to endure, the gathering turned its attention to the center of the table.

The bottom of the open parasol was loosely fitted into a clear glass bottle. The bottle had been personally selected by Dr. Wang from his own laboratory.

"It's all a question of my will," said Mrs. Smith. "When I focus my total attention on it and insist that it should spin, it spins." She closed her eyes, resting them for a moment. "Lately I've felt an ever growing rapport with it."

When she was ready for the demonstration she asked the observers for complete quiet and sat bolt upright upon her chair.

She began to stare at the parasol.

After a minute or two perspi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ration began to trickle from her forehead. Some of the sweat rolled to the edges of her eyes but her stare indicated obliviousness to any discomfort.

Suddenly, with an eerie squeak from the bottle's lip, the parasol began to spin its bizarre sunshade.

There were tiny momentary sounds from the observers but the squeak from the bottle was the loudest sound within the room.

For several minutes the spell-bound men watched the slowly twirling parasol.

The parasol stopped spinning and the scientists turned their eyes to Mrs. Smith.

Still staring at the parasol, she moved her lips in a slight whisper.

"My God—" she murmured.

Slowly rising to her feet, her eyes an unblinking glare of anguish, she kicked backward with a stiff leg, shoving the chair away from her back.

With a mechanical movement she stretched out her arms like one being crucified.

Her high-heeled shoes made an eerie squeaking sound as she started to spin. ★

FEATURED IN THE CURRENT ISSUE:

Teddy Bear

JAMES E. GUNN

Walker Between the Planes

GORDON R. DICKSON

WATCH FOR IT ON YOUR NEWSSTAND!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MOON HEAT

The moon has warmth for lovers and losers—and, since Apollo Eleven, surprises for cheaters

ERNEST TAVES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE GREAT BELDINI, feeling not so great, and aware of a faster than usual thumping in his chest, stared into the mirror and lathered the part of his face not covered with sideburns, beard, and mustache. The burns were of medium length, the beard vaguely Vandykian, and the mustache late WWII RAF. Not exactly a harmonious combination, but it pleased Beldini.

Beldini, in his lathering, used a brush and a cake of shaving soap; he'd discovered he could get more shaves per dime that way.

Finished, he reached into the space before the mirror, materialized a fifty-cent piece between thumb and forefinger, multiplied that one by four, vanished three of the coins, pocketed the last one. It was important to remain in form, though these days he worked mostly at children's birthday parties. It was particularly needful to hone the nerve endings on days which were not like other days.

So, he said half aloud, *this day begins, at any rate, like any other...*

...as last night had ended like many other nights. Gloria. Gloria had left while Beldini still slept, as usually happened when she stayed over. Beldini hadn't really been sleeping when Gloria left, he'd been lying there dozing, snuggling the warm sheets, reaching out for the girl not there, glad he didn't have to be up yet.

Gloria was small and her hair was as black and as long as could be and when she was nice she was very very nice, but when she thought about Beldini's earned income she tended to be—disputatious, to put it kindly. She didn't want to be that way and she hated herself the next morning, sometimes, fixing her hair, going off into the city to read manuscripts (at a very good salary, because she was very good at it), thinking about what she'd said the night before.

Gloria was disputatious when she thought about Beldini's bank account, not because she wanted to leave her job when they married—she wanted to keep on working—but because she had conceived the idea that she shouldn't marry Beldini until he was making at least two-thirds as much as she was. Parity, she thought, would be asking too much.

"It was different in the days of Houdini," Beldini had said the night before. "Magicians—not only Houdini but other good ones—filled theaters, appeared in big shows. *Jumbo*—"

"I know," Gloria said. She wanted to be kind, yes, but she had her standards. "But there are other things you could do except play for children's parties. You've got a perfectly good M.S. in geology. You could—"

Beldini's look cut her off. "But this is what I *want* to do," he said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He produced a Panamanian flag, then a yellow rose, from the unconcealed place between her breasts.

A seven-year-old kid I've got to love, Gloria thought. "How did—"

But she didn't really want to know and neither of them took it from there. After a while she wasn't disputatious and later she asked drowsily, "Joe?" He was Giuseppe, but she called him Joe except when she was really mad—then it was Beldini-The-So-Called-Great.

"Um?"

"What really happened to Wanda?" His first wife.

"An improperly trained assistant," Beldini mumbled. "My fault, actually."

"What?"

"I'm sleepy. Sawing a woman in half."

"What?"

"She did."

"Did what?"

"Sawed Wanda in half. Improperly trained..."

"You say the damndest things," Gloria said.

THE moon rock, in its longest dimension, measured no more than an inch and a half. It was quite black, with glassy flecks. Except for the angularity of the edges it looked much like a terrestrial stone from Egypt Beach or Marblehead or any of a hundred or a thousand places where rocks beyond counting had been thrust upon sandy places by rising and ebbing tides, by monotonously shuffling waves.

The grand auditorium in which the rock was displayed teemed with a busy humanity, much of it bent on closing exhibits and getting out of there after five days of dull but demanding work. You ever try to demonstrate a three-thousand-dollar desk-top calculator to a mousy, dandruff-haired, inquiring girl who is attracted by the pretty lights and the digital readout but doesn't know a square root from a turnip? Tired people, packing their gear, wanting out.

Whatever Beldini was he was not tired, though one might wonder why not. He had spent many hours of the four preceding days here—as inconspicuously as possible, if that needs saying. He had gotten a long and good look at the moon rock the first day and had seen on that and other days how they put the rock away at night. Now—surrounded by what approached the clatter of a country carnival striking the show before moving on—he felt his own stone in his jacket pocket. An adequate ringer, he thought. Not brilliantly convincing but under the circumstances (he thought) adequate.

The exhibits were supposed to be open until five but everybody was fudging. Fatigue and the feeling of something finished was in the air and Beldini, absently smoothing a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frayed collar, tuned into that scene with the acuity of a bat flying through an electric fan. He wished Gloria were watching.

The rock rested upon a small, rotating, velvet-covered dais, surrounded by a bolted-down transparent cylinder, which Beldini assumed to be constructed of bullet-proof glass. There was lots of illumination from spotlights and thousands of shutterbugs had photographed the dark object. A lens had been placed within the protective cylinder and people tended to gravitate toward that side, gazing silently until edged off by those who had not yet had a look. An armed guard, nattily uniformed in forest green, was never more than eight feet from the exhibit. The one now on duty was a slender young man, who often ran his right index finger over a neatly trimmed black mustache. He was, Beldini noted, a picture of perfect boredom.

Beldini skulked around an exhibit of technical books, keeping his eyes on one of the two main entrances into the auditorium. When he saw what he was looking for he briskly approached the moon rock. He had the lens to himself, stared through it intently.

"Sorry, mister," the guard said, "but we're closing this exhibit." The guard was less bored now. Beldini backed off slightly.

"But it isn't five—"

"We're closing," the guard said.

The NASA representative, for whom Beldini had been watching a few minutes earlier, was an old-fashioned young middle-aged professorial type. Pipe, baggy gray flannels, offensive jacket—you know. He yawned as he put down the black leather bag he carried. He opened the bag and withdrew—as if it were an object he was about to discard into the trash—a box made of thick plywood. It was painted blue and measured about eight inches on each side. The NASA man twisted a key in a small lock and raised the hinged lid. Within the box was a styrofoam cradle, of which the professor removed the top half. Within the hollowed space of the cradle was a quantity of quarter-inch foam rubber. NASA removed from his bag a small socket wrench.

"Stand back," the no-longer-bored guard said to a group of three eight- or nine-year-olds closing in. His hand was on the grip of his holstered forty-five. He had them outgunned, and knew it. One could see the dusty street in which he stood—at high noon, no doubt, feet apart, coolly facing the approach of the fastest draw this side of the Pecos.

NASA unscrewed the three restraining nuts, lifted aside the sheltering cylinder (it wasn't really bullet-proof, just a new polycarbonate you couldn't throw rocks through), and placed it on the floor. He casually lifted the moon rock from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its dais and Beldini went into action, gently insinuating himself between the rock and the box.

Watch this, Gloria...

"Sir," he said, "if I could just—touch it a moment?"

NASA made as if to bypass, but Beldini was not a magician for nothing. He had at his disposal a rich armamentarium of patter. The line he followed now ended with: "—and I've been a rock hound, an amateur geologist, that is, all my life." An obscure impulse told him not to mention the M.S. "If I could just—hold it a second?" His dark eyes beseeched, his lips quivered.

NASA cast his glance aloft, sighed and let the magician hold the stone for about a second, which was quite enough.

"Oh. Thank you, sir," said Beldini, handing NASA the ringer. "I'll never forget this moment."

NASA swaddled the stone (Beldini had found it, some years back, in the Ruggles mine in northern New Hampshire) in foam rubber, placed it in the bottom half of the cradle, replaced the upper half. He swung down the lid and turned the key in the little lock. Into the black leather bag. NASA left the auditorium, accompanied by the guard who, you could tell, was now patrolling the Main Street sidewalk of Dodge City.

Beldini took a last look at the exhibit, at the spot where the moon rock had rested. *I have*, he thought, *a baked potato in my pocket. A hot one at that and surely everyone in the auditorium can smell it...*

He got out of there.

Wait until I show Gloria...

BELDINI—the only private citizen in the world to own, if that isn't too loose a use of the word, a moon rock—took the pedestrian MBTA to Harvard Square. He was eager to see Gloria but she wouldn't be home yet, and on the way he stopped in a friendly neighborhood tavern. He wasn't a drinking man but he wanted a martini.

He sat on a stool at the bar, stared intently at the cocktail, while extracting a five-dollar bill from the bartender's ear. Carl grinned, making change. Beldini had been there before.

"Things been good?" Carl asked.

"Yes. I worked today."

"Good." Carl was busy with the usual lot of students, faculty, hangers on, unclassifiables.

"Good show," Beldini said absently not much later, finishing his drink.

Carl, passing by, heard the remark. "What?"

"Just talking to myself."

Carl shrugged. Beldini set down his empty glass, made it to the murky outside and slurped his way through the slush toward his apartment, which was on Ware Street. He was accompanied by an uninvited vague awareness of unease,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which impinged unpleasantly upon his anticipatory pleasure in showing Gloria the stone. Suddenly he wished he had been commissioned by a multimillionaire rock hound, who would shower him with pearls and rubies and keep the deal quiet.

I should, maybe, advertise in the Lapidary Journal...

The great magician, now snug in his unprepossessing but welcoming apartment, took the rock from his pocket, unwrapped it carefully from the clean handkerchief. He looked at it, eyes sparkling, and thought of Gloria. Anxiety departed.

There were several large black trunks in his bedroom, all of them plastered with tired and frayed labels and stickers, testaments of great appearances and one-night stands from here to there. Beldini opened one of these trunks and removed from its tangled contents a small collapsible stand, which he set up in the center of the living room. (Living room, bedroom, kitchenette and bath were all he had but just now Beldini might as well have been on the stage of, say, the Palace. Or the Hippodrome. A long time ago, yes.)

He covered the small stand with a square of black velvet, then covered that with a flamboyant expanse of purple and yellow silk. He returned the moon rock to his pocket.

He glanced at his watch and (inexpertly) mixed a pitcher of martinis. Buzzing of buzzer. Beldini greeted Gloria at the door with a great deal of onstage courtly pomp, took her coat with a lot of circumstance and placed her on the sofa before the covered stand. Wheels were spinning within Gloria's black-thatched lovely head—but she remained silent.

"A martini for Miss Gloria?" he asked.

"Of course, Mr. Beldini. But of course."

She took a cigarette from an intricately carved box on the table. Beldini produced—a matter of course—a lighted match from his pocket. Gloria knew Beldini pretty well but he still surprised her now and then.

"A mere trifle," he said, disappearing into the kitchen. He returned in a moment with the pitcher and two glasses. He filled the glasses. With, need we say, ceremony. As well as martinis, of course.

"Giuseppe," she said. Giuseppe was about half way between Joe and The-Not-So-Great-Beldini. "Just what the hell are you up to?"

"At the moment I'm up to drinking a martini. To drinking to us—to the most beguiling jewel of the publishing world (he gave her a stately bow) and, with all modesty (here he attempted an expression of humility but it didn't come off by orders of magnitude), to the last of the great magicians—"

Gloria gave him a look, they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clinked glasses and drank. She gave him another look. "I didn't say I made the best martinis in the world," he said. "However—"

He placed himself behind the stand, went into an elaborate line of patter, showed several times that the stand was incontestably unoccupied and finally whisked away the purple and yellow silk. To reveal the moon rock.

Talk about anticlimax.

"Yes," Beldini said, noting Gloria's expression. "Not exactly the Hope diamond." He left the stone on the stand, sat down beside Gloria. "I guess an explanation is in order."

"To say the least," Gloria said. "You've lost your mind, right?"

"Matter of fact, I haven't—but NASA's lost a moon rock." He rose and put the stone in Gloria's hand. "This came," he said, feeling the wonder of it, wondering what he was getting into, "from the moon. Honest to God. Apollo Eleven."

Gloria studied the stone. Gloria finished her martini. Beldini began to recognize that he might be in trouble. "Would it be too much," Gloria said, "to ask how you came by this small bauble?"

"Not at all. I lifted it from the exhibit at the AAAS meeting."

"I see. Yes. And you're proud as a damned peacock, aren't you?"

"It was a pretty slick job."

"Fill my glass, Giuseppe, please."

"Certainly."

"And next time let me make the martinis. Would it be indiscreet to ask what you intend to do with this?"

Beldini, replenishing both glasses, eyed Gloria warily. "Well," he said, "I don't rightly know yet. I—"

"Yes?" Tippy-tap of pointed toe on carpet. "Joseph?"

She'd never called him *that* before; Beldini didn't like the sound of it. "Money," Beldini said, and the words began to pour out. "I'll sell it to some collector. We want to be married and you're always—" He went on like that for a while.

"Why not try for the Mona Lisa next time?" Gloria said, her tone etched in acid. Not LSD, more like fuming nitric. "There really is a ready market for stolen moon rocks, right?"

"Well, there are problems but—why are you putting on your coat?"

"I'm getting out of here. Right now. You think I want to live with a cheap common crook, you got another think coming, Joseph, old boy."

He caught up with her in the slushy street.

"I may be a crook," he said, "but, by God, I'm not a cheap one. That was one hell of a classy heist. A moon rock!" He hoped he wasn't about to cry but he felt like it and Gloria, woman that she was,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

got the message. They went back to the apartment. She mixed (expertly) another pitcher of martinis.

"You did it for me, didn't you, you stupid bastard?" She didn't wait for an answer. "Let's call up for some pizzas, right?"

"Pizzas, my foot," he said. "We're going to Charles. You will have the filetto Caterina di Medici and I will have salsiccie. There will be wine." He withdrew from Gloria's impressive cleavage a large bouquet of roses of red paper.

"Do you have to do that all the time?" she asked, not really put off. "What did I ever do," she thoughtfully asked somebody, something, somewhere, "to deserve you?"

Wine in the glasses, then, candles on the table, and Beldini saying he would take Gloria to Napoli next year, and she nodding.

"A plain brown parcel," she said, as one would speak to a child. "Tomorrow. No return address, right?"

"What?"

"Tomorrow you send the moon rock back to NASA."

"But—"

"No. No buts. The filetto," she said, "is delicious."

GLORIA snuggled gently. "What happened to Linda?" she said, sleepily. Linda was, had been, Beldini's second and only other wife.

"Mmmm," said Beldini.

"You're not asleep yet, you faker. What happened to Linda?"

"Would you believe another untrained assistant?" Beldini stretched, and assumed the fetal position. "Her name was Martha. She had red hair and freckles."

"Screw Martha," Gloria said. "And no doubt you did. But what happened to Linda?"

"The vanishing box," Beldini mumbled. Gloria, wakening, hit him on the shoulder. "Well," he said, "when we drew the curtain on the other box, on the other side of the stage, where Linda was supposed to be—nothing. It was empty. Mmmm."

"Stay awake yet, you damned idiot. Then what?"

Beldini sighed. He was replete, satisfied, gone to there and back with salsiccie, Chianti and Gloria. He wanted to go to sleep but he knew which side his broad was better on. "All right," he said. "Linda had been giving me a hard time and I thought she was just screwing up the act to make me look like an idiot child up there."

"Not hard to do," Gloria whispered.

"What?"

"Nothing. Go on." Gloria assumed the fetal position, listening.

"I gave the sign to drop the big curtain, went out front to finish the schtick as best I could. And it wasn't a very good house, either. Bad show. Then Martha and I looked all over and everywhere

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Linda could have been—she wasn't. She'd blown the scene, like, she was gone. No trace. Then or ever. All right?"

"You say the damndest things," Gloria said. Beldini now wasn't sure he wanted to go to sleep. He made a move. "No," Gloria said. "For Pete's sake, act your age."

"Mmmm."

"Remind me never to appear in an act with you, all right?"

"All right."

NEXT morning Beldini lathered his face and pulled coins from the air, same as yesterday. But this morning he'd awakened when Gloria had and they had talked. A long time. At the end of it: "Be sure to send the rock back to NASA," she said.

"All right. Just 'Houston' ought to get it there. No return address."

"That's right. Wrap it up, put some stamps on," she said, fixing her hair, "and drop it into a mailbox." Beldini nodded. "Then you'll be an honest man again. At least you won't have a hot rock in your pants."

"A baked potato," he said. "I know you don't want to live with a crook. So—I won't be one."

Gloria was at the door. "I know why you heisted the rock," she said. "We'll work something out. We will."

Then she was gone—leaving the scent of her presence and, as it were, a promissory note.

Beldini carefully, sadly, enclosed the moon rock in layers of newspapers, which was all he had by way of packing material. He was rummaging around for a cardboard carton when the presence appeared. It didn't come through the door or anything—it was just standing there between him and the moon rock, where only the tacky carpet had been before. It had numbers of legs and arms but only one head. Beldini rose, backed warily against the wall.

"Nothing to fear," a voice said. Beldini thought the intonation Slavonic.

Beldini asked the questions usual in such situations: who, from where, why, like that, but without waiting for answers said, "I hope you won't mind if I say I find your, er, materialization offensive?"

"Of course not." The visitor shimmered, disappeared, and came back, this time in the semblance of what might have been a six-legged armadillo. Buying time, thinking, wondering, Beldini shook his head.

"Stupid of me," the visitor said, shimmering again. This time it was a naked girl—about eighteen, say, with long blonde hair—with the kind of attributes you'd expect if you could make them yourself, no pun intended.

She was free of all shyness, though Beldini knew he was flushing and cursed himself for it.

"It's just that we need the—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rock," she said, in her voice a note of apology.

"But I'm about to return it to NASA—"

"It's ours. We do need it."

"Who's we?"

She, or it, or whatever, sat Beldini on the sofa beside her, not a difficult achievement under the circumstances. "Would you be more comfortable if I put some clothes on?"

"Certainly not," Beldini said. *Wait until I tell Gloria*, he thought, knowing he would never tell Gloria.

The girl told it simply and effectively; what it boiled down to was that *they* were from *way* out there and Beldini's supposed stone was a most sophisticated communicative device they had placed on the moon—where Apollo Eleven happened to land. How long ago? About 28,000 years, earth time.

"Back to *Two Thousand and One*," Beldini muttered.

"What?"

"A film of ours, some time back, same idea."

It searched her memory or he searched its—or whatever. "Oh. Yes, well, you have the idea then."

Beldini unwrapped the stone. "This tiny thing?"

"Sentinels don't have to be crude twenty-foot monoliths," she said, with something of scorn in her voice. "This can do everything that one did, and more."

"Prove that it's yours," said Beldini, suddenly honest, trying to keep his eyes away.

"Well—just me, my materialization. I can show you others—"

"Stay as sweet as you are," Beldini said, remembering all those legs. He cautiously put his hand on hers, with no disastrous effects. It felt like a warm human hand. You've got to start someplace. "Why did it take you so long to come after it?" he asked. "Apollo Eleven was weeks ago."

"We're from *way* out there," she reminded him. "Even with superwarp and hyperspace-overdrive."

"Yes. I'd forgotten. What's your name?" She blinked lashes at him. "That's silly, of course, you don't have one of our names—though, I must say, you look like one of us. I mean, I ought to call you something."

"How about Lorna?"

"Lorna's fine," Beldini said. "It suits you. Look, Lorna—" He held her hand in his and it was still warm and responsive. Beldini responded and Lorna perceived that.

"We do good materializations, Joe," she said.

Beldini sighed. "Tell me this, then—don't do it but tell me. You want the stone and I have it. Why don't you materialize yourself into a—don't *do* it, I said—into a, shall we say, more powerful man than I and just take it away? Beat me to a pulp. If you can come from out there to here and—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Can't do it that way," Lorna said. "There's this stupid provision in the Codex. We can do everything except use force. All I can do is—persuade you, Joe." She came closer. "Our information is that you—earthlings are on the threshold of becoming reasonable—"

You may be misinformed, Beldini thought, absently putting a hand on Lorna's knee.

"We'll reward you," Lorna said. A softness materialized in her eyes, with nothing of softness in Beldini responding.

Beldini crossed his Rubicon. "If it's yours," he, man of virtue, said. "You should have it. Could you just—do something with it, to show—"

Lorna gently dislodged both of Beldini's hands, materialized something that looked like a cigarette lighter and flicked a switch. The stone became luminescent. "Don't look right at it," Lorna said. Subliminal happenings were beginning to form themselves in Beldini's mind. Emanations were issuing from the stone, Beldini knew, but he didn't know how he knew that. He heard nothing but felt his brain expanding inside his skull until he knew it would pop open and a little chick would hop out.

He said, "All right, already, turn it off," and Lorna did.

"So take the stone," he said.

Together on the sofa again.

"Thank you, Joe," Lorna said. "You will be rewarded."

"How?" he asked. Thinking of money, thinking of pearls and rubies, thinking of Gloria.

"How about this for openers?" Lorna reached for Beldini's buttons, looking for parts of him with parts of her. When he was naked as she Beldini—almost absently—produced a Nicaraguan flag from the general area of Lorna's dainty pubis.

"That's funny," Lorna said. "Do you know any more tricks?"

That's what you ask about a dog, he thought. "It's not easy to do them, not that kind, naked," he said. Lorna was a vision and Beldini lost his cool—but in the end, alas, Gloria's image intruded. Beldini explained.

"No offense, Joe," Lorna said. "I'm not really a girl anyway. But we do materialize well, don't we?"

"You certainly do," said Beldini, sitting there naked as a jaybird, wondering why he was carrying matters of conscience or something to what must be either psychotic or imbecilic length.

Lorna rose, shrugged her shoulders in an oddly unhuman way and took the rock in her hands. "I say this, Joe—you will be rewarded. Goodbye. I'm sorry, in a way, you didn't want me. It might have been interesting. But I understand. See you later."

And she was gone, the sentinel with her. Beldini looked at the newspaper he'd wrapped the stone in, looked at his clothes strewn all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over the room. Well, he thought, at least I won't have to go to the mailbox.

"I SWEAR on a stack of Bibles, or on anything else, including your popliteal fossa," Beldini said, "that the moon rock is on its way to its proper owners."

This was an indirect answer, but it satisfied Gloria. "Good," she said and in the saying was something different about her. Beldini couldn't put a finger on it. He could put both hands on her, all ten fingers, yes, but could not spot the different—something. A warmth, a softness. "We'll have pizzas in tonight, yes? And Chianti?"

"Yes." This seemed a night for having pizzas in.

"I've had a hard day," Gloria said. "You call, and I'll take a bath while they're coming. Make mine pepperoni."

Beldini went to the living room and phoned in the order. He went back into the bedroom to change into something more comfortable. Gloria was in the bathroom. The door was about half open, the water was running. Beldini stepped toward that door and collided with—Lorna. His pupils dilated. "Get—" He started to whisper, but Lorna was full of something.

"I said you'd be rewarded," she said. Beldini thanked a number of deities that the water was running.

"It's all right," he said, "I really don't care. Just take the rock and go, all right? Like now?"

Lorna was miffed. "All right," she said, "but first—"

She did something and the walls of the room seemed to move a little, and one of Beldini's vanishing boxes was out of its trunk and assembled in the middle of the room.

"We do appreciate your cooperation," Lorna said. "We're nonviolent, so we *have* to have cooperation. Thanks, Joe."

She gave him a sweet kiss and was gone.

At that moment the water stopped running in the bathroom—and Linda stepped out of the battered vanishing box. She seemed a bit muddled, for which she might possibly be forgiven. "It wasn't easy finding her," Beldini heard, as from an astral plane. "Goodbye, Joe."

Linda wore the costume she'd worn the night of her disappearance. Beldini remembered it.

"Beldini?" Linda said, wondering, approaching him.

"What was that, Joe?" Gloria called from the bathroom. ★

REMEMBER New subscriptions and changes of address require 5 weeks to process!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

PART TWO

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

When medical science cannot let him live as he wants, yet will not let him die, aged but lusty and extremely wealthy Johann Sebastian Bach Smith sets his financial empire in order and assigns his best friend and legal adviser, Jacob Salomon, the task of securing 'a warm body' into which his brain can be transplanted. The operation has never been successfully performed on a human—the situation is further complicated by the fact that the body-donor must belong to an extremely rare blood group.

Johann Smith is literally gambling for death—but the operation proves successful. He recovers to find himself wearing the body of his lovely secretary, Eunice Branca. A dialogue ensues between the brain and the body—highly revealing to both.

X

(Well, Eunice?) (So you want to hear about my little bastard?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Copyright © 1970 by Robert A. Heinlein

Boss, you're a dirty old man.) (Sweetheart, I don't want to hear anything you don't want to tell. You could have quintuplets by a Barbary ape and it wouldn't affect how I feel about you.) (Mealy-mouthed old hypocrite. You're dying of curiosity.) (I am like hell 'dying of curiosity.' It's your business and yours alone.) (Oh, don't be so mean, Boss. My business *is* your business. How else? Seeing the close relationship we have . . . and which I *like*, if there is any doubt in your dirty old mind. You brought me back to life . . . when I was as dead as folk songs. And now I'm happy. So coax me a little, I'll give.) (All right, dearest—how in the world did you manage to have a baby? When did you find *time*? Your snoopsheet traced you clear back through high school.)

(Boss, did that security report mention the high school semester I lost from rheumatic fever?) (Let me think. Yes, it did.) (Misspelling. Spell it 'romantic' fever. I was fifteen and a cheerleader. Our basketball team won the regional

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conference . . and I felt so good, I got knocked up.) (Eunice, 'knocked up' is not an expression a lady uses.) (Oh, Boss, sometimes you make me sick. By your rules I'm not a lady and never was—and I've got as much right to be inside this skull as you have and maybe more—so you haven't any business trying to force me to talk the way your mother did. Not when I no longer have Joe to turn to when I get tired of your prissy ways.)

(I'm sorry, Eunice.)

('Sall right, Boss. I love you. But you and I are cuddled up pretty close; we ought to relax and enjoy it. I can teach you a lot about how to be female, if you'll let me. But right now you listen. Don't interrupt.) The ghost voice started reciting a string of monosyllables, all of them taboo in the far-away days of Johann's youth.

(Eunice! Please, darling, it doesn't become you.)

(Pipe down, Boss. I'm going to finish this even if you blow every fuse.) The recitation went on—

(That does it, I guess—those are the words I had tagged in my mind never to use in your presence. Now tell me—was there even *one* you didn't understand?)

(That's not the point. A person should not use language which offends others.)

(I never did, Boss. In public. But I'm home now—or thought I was. Do you want me to go away again?)

(No, no, no! Uh, you were away?) (I certainly was, Boss. Dead, I suppose. But I'm here now and I want to stay. If you'll let me. If I can relax and be happy and not have to be on guard all the time for fear of offending you. I can't see why a Latin polysyllable makes me more a lady than a monosyllable with the same meaning. You and I think with the same brain—yours—eat with the same mouth—mine, or used to be—and pee through the same hole. So why shouldn't we share the same vocabulary? Speaking of peeing—oh, pardon me, sir, I meant to say 'micturation—')

(None of your sarcasm, girl!)

(Just who are you calling a 'girl,' girlie? Feel yourself, go ahead and feel. Some knockers, eh, Boss? And how you used to stare at them, you horny old goat. Made me tingle. But I was saying, speaking of micturation, that we are going to have to ring for a bedpan fairly soon, now that we no longer are rigged with plumbing . . . and there is no way for me to leave the room while you pee. I don't dare leave; it's *dark* out there and I might not find my way back. So it's either get used to such things—or send me away forever—or bust your nice new bladder.)

(Okay, Eunice, you've made your point.)

(Have I offended you again, Boss?)

(Eunice, you have *never* offended me. Sometimes you have startled me, sometimes you have surprised me—and often delighted me. But you have *never* offended me. Not even with that list of blunt words.)

(Well . . . as I saw it, if you already knew them you couldn't really be offended; if you didn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understand them, then you couldn't *possibly* be offended.)

(All right, dear. I'll quit trying to correct your speech. But for the record—I used all those words long before your mother was born. Possibly before your grandmother was born.) (Grandma is sixty-eight). (Learned 'em all and used them with relish long before your grandmother was born—with relish because they were sinful, then. I take it they aren't, to you kids now.)

(No, they're just words. Short-talk.)

(Not short-talk, as they were used before video corrupted the language. Except— What was that one word? 'Frimp'?)

(Oh. Shouldn't have included that one, Boss; it's not a classic word. Current slang, swing talk. It's a general verb, one which includes every possible way to copulate—) (Pfui! You youngsters. When I was a kid, we had at least two dozen words meaning 'frimp,' some new, some old, besides the standard taboo words for it.) (You didn't let me finish, Boss. Every possible way to hook up two or more bodies—any number—of any sex, or combinations of all six sexes, and including far-out variations that would shock you right out of this bed. But swing is a today scene, so it's not surprising you hadn't heard the word 'frimp' before.)

(Oh, I'd heard it. I have news for you, infant.)

(Yes, sir? I mean 'Yes, Miss Smith,' dearie. *'Miss'* Smith—what a giggle I got when I first heard it. But it's nice, since it means both of us. Say, Rosy is all right, isn't he? Puts more into hand-kissing than some studs do into a romp on the pad.) (Sweetheart, you not only have a dirty mind—but it veers.) (How can I help having a dirty mind when it's actually *yours*, Boss—I'm hip deep in the stuff.) (Shut up, Eunice; it's my turn. The swing scene is nothing new. The Greeks had a word for it. So did the Romans. And so on through history. The orgy was relished in Victorian England. It was far from unknown in my youth in the heart of the Bible Belt, even though it was dangerous in those days. Eunice, as long as we are trying to get easy with each other, let me say this: Anything you've ever seen, or tried, or heard of, I did, or had done to me, before your grandmother was born—and if I liked it, I did it again and again and *again*. No matter how risky.)

THE second voice was silent a moment. (Maybe we simply start younger today. Less risk and fewer rules.)

(Beg to doubt.)

(Oh, I'm sure we do. I told you how young I was when I got caught. Fifteen. And I started a year younger.)

(Eunice my love, the main difference between the young and the old, the cause of the so-called Generation Gap—a gap in understanding that has existed throughout all time—is that the young simply cannot believe that the old ever really were young . . . whereas to an old person his youth is something that happened just last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

week, and it annoys the hell out of him when someone in effect denies that this old duffer ever *owned* a youth.)

(Boss?) The thought was gentle and soft.

(Yes, dearest?)

(Boss, I always knew you were young underneath, behind all those horrid liver spots. I knew it when I was alive, I mean . . . and wished dreadfully that you weren't old and sick in your body. It hurt me so, to see you hurt. Sometimes I went home and cried. Especially when it made you cross and you would say something you didn't mean and then be sorry. I *wanted* you to get well . . . and knew you couldn't. I was one of the first to sign up—Joe and I both—as soon as word reached us through the Rare Blood Club. Couldn't do it sooner or you might have found out—and forbidden me to.)

(Eunice, Eunice!)

(Don't you believe me?)

(Yes, darling, yes . . . but you're making us cry.)

(So blow your nose, and stop it. Because everything turned out *all right*. Look, you wanted to hear about my little bastard—will that take your mind off troubles we no longer have?)

(Uh . . . only if you want to, Eunice. My love. My only love.)

(I made it plain that I *wanted* to tell you, didn't I? I'll tell all—and that'll take a long time—if you *want to hear. If you won't be* shocked. Say 'Please,' Boss—because the details of my sex life ought to help you in handling your own sex life. *Our* sex life, that is. Or did you mean that stuff you were shoveling at Dr. Garcia about not being 'actively female'?)

(Uh . . . I don't know, Eunice, I haven't been a woman long enough to know *what* I want. Shucks, darling, instead of thinking like a girl I'm still ogling girls. That little redheaded nurse, for example.)

(So I noticed.)

(Was that sarcasm? Or jealousy?)

(What? I do not intend to be sarcastic, Boss dear; I don't want us ever to be nasty with each other. And jealousy is just a word in the dictionary to me. I simply meant that, when Winnie was making up our face and you were sneaking a peek down the neck of her smock every time she leaned over, I was staring as hard as you were. No bra. Cute ones, aren't they? Winnie is female and knows it. If you were male in your body as well as in your head, I wouldn't trust her as far as I could throw a bed.)

(I thought you said you weren't jealous?)

(I'm not. I merely meant that Winnie would trip you and beat you to the floor. But I was not criticizing her. I've nothing against girls. A girl can be quite a blast.)

JOHANN was slow in answering. (Eunice, uh, were you implying that you have—used to have—*relations with other*, uh—)

(Oh, Boss, don't be so early twentieth century; we've turned the corner on the twenty-first. Tell it bang. Do you mean 'Am I a Lez?' Homosexual?)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(No, not at all! Well, perhaps I did mean that in a way. At least I wanted you to clear up what *you* meant. As it didn't seem possible. You were married and—or was your marriage just a coverup? I suppose—)

(Quit supposing, dear. Bang. I was not homosexual and neither is Joe. Joe is a tomcat always ready to yowl and wonderful at it. Except when he's painting; then he forgets everything else. But 'homosexual' isn't a word that bothers anyone my age, either the word or the fact. And why should it be with the Government practically subsidizing it with propaganda about too many babies that starts in kindergarten? If I had taken the Bilitis pledge, I would never have had that phony 'rheumatic fever.' But, while girls are cuddly and I've never had any inhibitions about them, I was—*always*—far too interested in boys to live on Gay Street. But which team are you on, Boss? One minute you're telling me how you drool over Winnie, the next minute you seem upset that I drooled, too. So what are you going to do with us, dear? Left-handed? Right-handed? Both hands? Or no hands at all? I guess I could stand anything but that last. Do I have a vote?)

(Why, of course you do.)

(I wonder, Boss. You sputtered when I suggested that you could thank Doc Hedrick in bed . . . and sparked some more at the notion of going to bed with a girl. Sure you're not planning on sewing it up?)

(Oh, Eunice, don't talk silly! Beloved, happy as I am that we are together, that 'generation gap' is still there. My fault this time, as I have a life-long habit of being careful in what I say to a woman, even one I am in bed with—)

(You're certainly in bed with *me*!)

(I certainly am. And I'm finding it even harder to be flatly truthful with you—'tell it bang' as you say than to adjust to being female. But before Dr. Hedrick brought up the matter I saw the implications and complications and consequences of being female . . . and young . . . and rich.)

('Rich.' I hadn't thought about *that* one.)

(Eunice beloved, we're going to *have* to think about it. Of course we're going to be 'actively female—')

(*Hooray*!)

(Quiet, dear. If we were poor, the simplest thing would be to ask your Joe to take us back. If he would have us. But we *aren't* poor; we're embarrassingly rich—and a fortune is harder to get rid of than it is to accumulate. Believe me. When I was about seventy-five, I tried to unload my wealth while I was still living so that it would not go to my granddaughters. But to give away money without wasting most of it in the process is as difficult as getting the genie back into the bottle. So I gave up and simply arranged my will to keep most of it out of the hands of my alleged descendants.)

('Alleged?')

(Alleged. Eunice, my first wife was a sweet girl, much like yourself, I think. But the poor dear died in childbirth—bearing my one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son, also dead for many years now. Agnes had made me promise to marry again and I did, almost at once. One daughter from that marriage and her mother divorced me before the child was a year old. I married a third time—again one daughter, again a divorce. I never knew my daughters well and outlived both of them and their mothers. But—Eunice, you're a rare-blood yourself; do you know how blood types are inherited?)

(Not really.)

(Thought you might. Being mathematically inclined, the first time I laid eyes on an inheritance chart for blood types I understood it as well as I understand the multiplication tables. Having lost my first wife to childbirth, with both my second and third wives I made certain that donors were at hand before they went into delivery rooms. Second wife was type A, third was type B—years later I learned that both my putative daughters were type O.)

(I think I missed something, Boss.)

(Eunice, it is impossible for a type-AB father to sire type-O children. Now wait—I did *not* hold it against my daughters; it was none of their doing. I would have loved Evelyn and Roberta—tried to, wanted to—but their mothers kept me away from them and turned them against me. Neither girl had any use for me . . . until it turned out that I was going to dispose of a lot of money some day—and then the switch from honest dislike to phony 'affection' was nauseating. I feel no obligation to my granddaughters since in fact they are *not* my granddaughters. Well? What do you think?)

(Uh—Boss, I don't see any need to comment.)

(So? Who was it not five minutes ago was saying that we ought to be absolutely frank with each other?)

(Well . . . I don't disagree with your conclusion, Boss, just with how you reached it. I don't see that heredity should enter into it. Seems to me you are resenting something that happened a long time ago—and that's not good. Not good for you, Boss.)

(Child, you don't know what you're talking about.)

(Maybe not.)

(No maybe's about it. A baby is a baby is a baby. Babies are to love and take care of and that's what this whole bloody mess is about, else none of it makes sense. Eunice, I told you that my first wife was something like you. Agnes was my Annabel Lee and we loved with a love that was more than a love and I had her for only a year—then she died giving me my son. Then I loved *him* just as much. When he was killed something died inside me . . . and I made a foolish fourth marriage hoping to bring it alive again by having another son. But I was lucky that time—no children and it merely cost me a chunk of money to get shut of it.)

(I'm sorry, Boss.)

(Nothing to be sorry about now. But I was telling you something else—Eunice, when we're up and around, remind me to dig into my jewelry case and show you my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son's dog tag—all that I have left of him.)

(If you want to. But isn't that morbid, dear? Look forward, not back.)

(Depends on how you look back. I don't grieve over him; I'm proud of him. He died honorably, fighting for his country. But that military dog tag shows his blood type. Type O.)

(Oh.)

(Yes, I said 'O.' So my son was no more my physical descendant than were my daughters. Didn't keep me from loving him.)

(Yes but—you learned it from his identification tag? After he was dead?)

(Like hell I did. I knew it the day he was born; I had suspected that he might not be mine from the time Agnes turned out to be pregnant—and I accepted it. Eunice, I wore horns with dignity and always kept suspicions to myself. Just as well—as all my wives contributed to my cornute state. Horns? Branching antlers! The husband who expects anything else is riding for a fall. But I never had illusions about it, so it never took me by surprise. No reason why it should, as I got the best parts of my own training from married women, starting clear back in my early teens. I think that happens in every generation. But horns make a man's head ache only when he's stupid enough to believe that *his* wife is different—when all the evidence he has accumulated should cause him to assume the exact opposite.)

(Boss, you think *all* women are like that?)

(Oh, no! In my youth I knew many marriages in which both the bride and groom, to the best of my knowledge and belief, went to the altar virgin and stayed faithful a lifetime. There may be couples like that among you kids today.)

(Some, I think. But you couldn't prove it by me.)

(Nor by me. Nor by all the kinseys who ever collected statistics. Eunice, sex is the one subject *everybody* lies about. But what I was saying is this: A man who takes his fun where he finds it, then marries and expects his wife to be different, is a fool. I wasn't that sort of fool. Let me tell you about Agnes.

(Agnes was an angel—with round heels. That's obsolete slang which means what is sounds like. I don't think Agnes ever hated anyone in her short life and she loved as easily as she breathed. She—Eunice, you said you had started young?)

(Fourteen, Boss. Precocious slut, huh?)

(Precocious possibly, a slut never. Nor was my angel Agnes ever a slut and she happily gave away her virginity—so she told me—at twelve. I—)

(*Twelve*!)

(Surprised, dear? That generation gap again; your generation thinks it invented sex. Agnes was precocious; sixteen was fairly young in those days, from what a male could guess about it—not much!—and seventeen or eighteen was more common. I think. Actually encountering female virginity and being *certain* of it—well, I'm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no expert. But Agnes wasn't hanging up a record even for those days; I recall a girl in my grammar school who was 'putting out,' as kids called it then, at eleven—and getting away with it cold, teacher's pet and butter wouldn't melt in her mouth and winning pins for Sunday School attendance.

(My darling Agnes was like that except that Agnes's goodness wasn't pretense; she was good all the way through. She simply didn't see anything sinful about sex.)

(Boss, sex is *not* sinful.)

(Did I *ever* say it was? However, in those days I felt guilty about it, until Agnes cured me of such nonsense. She was sixteen and I was twenty and her father was a prof at the cow college I went to and I was invited to their house for dinner one Sunday night—and our first time happened on their living room sofa so fast it startled me, scared me some.)

(What frightened you, dear? Her parents?)

(Well, yes. Just upstairs and probably not asleep. Agnes being so young herself—age of consent was eighteen then and while I don't recall ever letting it stop me, boys were jumpy about it. And that night I wasn't prepared, not having expected it.)

(Prepared how, Boss?)

(Contraception. I had a year to go to get my degree, and no money and no job lined up, and having to get married wasn't something I relished.)

(But contraception is a *girl's* responsibility, Boss. That's why I felt so silly when I got caught. I wouldn't have dreamed of asking a boy to marry me on that account—even if I had been certain which boy. Once I knew I was caught I gritted my teeth and told my parents and took my scolding—Daddy was going to have to pay my fine; I was not yet licensed. Grim—but no talk of getting married. I wasn't asked who did it and never volunteered an opinion.)

(Didn't you have an opinion, Eunice?)

(Well . . . just an opinion. Let me tell it bang. Our basketball team and us three girl cheerleaders were all in the same hotel, with the coach and the girls' phys-ed teacher riding herd on us. Only they didn't; they went out on the town. So we gathered to celebrate in the suite the boys were in. Somebody had lettuce. Marijuana. I took two puffs and didn't like it—and went back to gin and ginger ale which tasted better and was almost as new to me. Didn't have any intention of swinging; it wasn't the smart scene at our school and I had a steady I was faithful to—well, usually—who wasn't on the trip. But when the head cheerleader took her clothes off—well, there it was. So I counted days in my mind and decided I was safe by two days and peeled down, last of three to do so. Nobody made me do it, Boss, no slightest flavor of rape. So how could I blame the boys?)

(Only it turned out I didn't have two days leeway and by the middle of January I was fairly certain. Then I was certain. Then my parents were certain—and I was sent south to stay with an aunt while I recovered from rheumatic fever I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never had. And recovered two hundred and sixty-nine days after that championship game, barely in time to enter school in the fall. And graduated with my class.)

(But your *baby*, Eunice? Boy? Girl? How old now? Twelve? And where is the child?)

(Boss, I don't know. I signed an adoption waiver so that Daddy would get his money back if somebody with a baby license came along. Boss, is that fair? Five thousand dollars was a lot of money to my father—yet anyone on Welfare gets off free, or can even demand a free abortion. I can't see it.)

(You changed the subject, dear. Your baby?)

(Oh. They told me it was born dead. But I hear they usually say that if a girl signs the papers and somebody is waiting for it.)

(We can find out. If your baby didn't live, then the fine was never levied. Didn't your father tell you?)

(I never asked. It was a touchy subject, Boss. It was 'rheumatic fever,' never an unlicensed baby. Just as well, I guess, as when I turned eighteen, I was licensed for three with no questions raised.)

(Eunice, no matter what cover-up was used, if your baby is living, we can find it!)

The second voice did not answer. Johann persisted. (Well, Eunice?)

(Boss . . . it's better to let the dead past bury its dead.)

(You don't want children, Eunice?)

(That wasn't what I said. You said it didn't matter that your son wasn't really yours. I think you were right. But doesn't it cut both ways? If there is a child somewhere, almost thirteen now—we're strangers. I'm not the mother who loved it and brought it up; I'm nobody. *Really* nobody—you forget that I was killed.)

(Eunice! Oh, darling!)

(You see? If we found that boy, or girl, we couldn't admit that I'm still alive—alive again, I mean—inside your head. That's the thing we don't *dare* admit . . . or back they come with those horrid straps and we'll *never* be free.) She sighed. (But I wish I could have had *your* baby. You were telling me about Agnes, dearest. Tell me more. Am I really somewhat like her?)

(Very much like her, Eunice. Oh, I don't mean she looked like you. But if I believed in reincarnation—I don't—I would be tempted to think that you were Agnes, come back to me.)

(Maybe I am. Why don't you believe in it, Boss?)

(Uh . . . do you?)

(No. I mean I *didn't* believe in it, even though most of our friends did. I couldn't see any reason to believe either way, so I kept my mouth shut. But, Boss, it gives one a different viewpoint to have been killed . . . and then turn out not to stay dead. Dearest Boss—you think I'm a figment of your imagination, don't you?)

JOHANN did not answer. The voice went on: (Don't be afraid to admit it, Boss; you won't offend me. *I* know I'm *me*. I don't need proof. But you do. You need

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to know. Admit it, darling. Be open with me.)

She sighed again. (Eunice, I do need to know. But—if I'm crazy—if you are just my own mind talking back to me—I'd rather not know it. Darling, forgive me . . . but I was relieved when you told me that you didn't want us to try to find your baby.)

(I knew you were relieved . . . and I knew why. Boss, don't be so right-now. We have all the time in the world, so relax and be happy. Proof will turn up—something I know and that you couldn't possibly know except through me. And that will be that, and you will be as certain as I am.)

Johann nodded to herself. (That makes sense, Eunice—and it sounds like the scoldings you used to give me when I got fretful. You used to mother me.)

(I'm going to go right on mothering you, and scolding you when you need it—and loving you all the time, Boss. But there is one thing there is some hurry about.)

(What?)

(That bedpan. Unless you want us to have a childish accident.)

(Oh, damn!)

(Relax, Boss. Get used to it.)

(Damnation, I do *not* want to be placed on a bedpan by a nurse like a baby being put to potty. You know what'll happen? Nothing! I'll clamp down and not be able to do it. Eunice, there's my bathroom through that door—can't we ask to be helped into there . . .and left in private?)

(Boss, you know what would happen. You ring for the nurse and tell her. She'll try to argue you out of it. Then she'll go find Dr. Garcia. He'll show up and argue, too. If you're stubborn, he'll get Jake. By the time Jake shows up, we've wet the bed.)

(Eunice, you're infuriating. All right, let's ring for that goddam pan.)

(Hold it, Boss. Can we get this side rail down?)

(Huh?)

(If we can, what's stopping us from going to the bathroom without asking?)

(But, Eunice—I haven't walked in more than a year!)

(That was before you got this secondhand, good-as-new, factory-reconditioned, female body, Boss.)

(You think we can walk?)

(Let's find out. If standing up makes us dizzy, we can hang onto the bed and ease down to the floor. I'm *certain* we can crawl, Boss.)

(Let's do it!)

(Let's see how this side rail works.)

JOHANN found the guard rails baffling. There seemed to be no way for a person in the bed to let them down. Not surprising, she told herself; if these bars were meant to protect a befuddled patient, then proper design called for it to be impossible for a patient to remove them. (Eunice, we're going to have to ring for the nurse. Damn!) (Don't give up, Boss. Maybe it's a button on the console. If we scrooch around till our head is at the foot, I think we can reach the console.)

So Johann pulled up her knees and twisted and switched ends—and was surprised and delighted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at how limber her new body was. Then she stretched her right arm through the bars at the foot of the bed, could not quite reach the console—and cussed, and then discovered how the side rail locked—two simple catches, one for each side, at the foot of the bed below the springs, out of reach—no doubt the designer thought—of any patient ill enough to need the side rails.

She thumbed open the leftside catch; the rail, counterweighted, pushed down easily. She giggled. (How're we doing, partner?) (Fine so far, Boss. Hang onto the end of the bed while we get our feet down. Keel over and they'll put us in a wet pack—so hang on!)

Johann got her feet to the floor, stood trembling while she clung to the bed. (Dizzy.) (Of course. It will go away. Steady down, dear. Boss, I think we could walk . . . but let's play safe and crawl. If we get dizzy again and take a dive on the rug, Winnie will be in here like a shot—and from then on they'll feed us through the bars. What do you think?) (I think we had better reach that pot pronto before we have to blame it on the cat. We crawl.)

Getting to the floor was no problem; crawling was another matter, she caught her knees on the hospital gown. So she sat up—Johann discovered that her new body folded easily and naturally into a contortion young Johann had found difficult at twelve.

She did not stop to wonder. The bed jacket was no trouble; it fastened in front with a magnostrip, she shrugged it off and laid it aside. But the hospital gown fastened in back. (Stickstrip?) (Just a tie-tie. Feels like a bow knot. Careful, Boss, don't snarl it.)

The gown joined the jacket. Unencumbered now, Johann resumed crawling. The bath-dressing room door snapped out of her way and she reached her objective.

Presently she sighed in relief. (I feel better.) (That makes two of us. Want to try walking back? As far as we have something to grab onto? Or clear to the bed if we whistle a chair and have it roll in front of us.) (I'm game.)

Johann found that she was not unsteady on her feet—walking was easier than it had been for twenty years. Nevertheless she stayed close to the walls, the bathroom having been equipped years ago with grab rails for a frail old man grimly afraid of falling. It took her close to a tall three-way mirror in the dressing room end. She stopped.

Then she stepped into the central spot and looked at herself. (My God, Eunice, but you're beautiful!)

(My God, but we're a sloppy bitch! Boss, look at those toenails! Claws. Talons. And, oh dear, my breasts sag! And my belly is positively flabby.)

(Beautiful. Utterly gorgeous. Eunice beloved, I always wanted to see you starked naked. And now I do.)

(So you do. I wish I had had time to get looking nice before you saw me. Hair a mess. And—yes, I thought so. We stink.) (Hey!) (Sorry, hit the panic button by mistake. Boss, we're go-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to have a hot, soapy bath before we get back into that bed. That's straight from Washington. We can't do much about flab in one day—but we can get clean.) She turned and inspected her buttocks. (Oh, dear! A broad should be broad—but not *that* broad.) (Eunice, that's the prettiest fanny in the state. In the whole country.) (Used to be, maybe. And it's going to be again and that's a promise, Boss. Tomorrow morning we start systematic exercise. Tighten up everything.) (Okay, if you say so—though I still say you're the most gorgeously beautiful thing I ever saw in my life. Uh, Eunice? That mermaid getup you wore once— You were wearing a trick bra with it . . .weren't you?)

She giggled. (Heavens, no. Just me, Boss. And paint. But my breasts were firm as rocks then; Joe had something to work with. I guess that's the nakedest you've ever seen me.)

(What do you think I'm staring at *now*, Beautiful?)

(Oh, I meant back before I was killed. When I was your 'nice' girl who didn't dare let you see me as naked as I knew you would like, you dirty old man. Although you *could* have seen me naked—and much more beautiful — any time you had gotten up the nerve to ask.)

(I'm going to spend hours every day standing right here and staring.)

(No reason why you shouldn't dear; it's your body now. But let's put an exercise mat on the floor and get in that toning up at the same time. Most exercises can be done better with the aid of a full-length mirror. I think we—)

The door snapped open. *"Miss Smith!"*

JOHANN started with surprise, then answered savagely, "Miss Gersten, what the devil do you mean by bursting into my bath without knocking?"

The nurse ignored the outburst, hurried to her patient, put an arm around her. "Lean on my shoulder, let's get you back into bed. Oh, dear, I don't know what Dr. Garcia will say! He'll kill me—are you all right?" Johann saw that the little nurse was about to cry.

"Of course I'm all right." Johann tried to shrug off the arm, found that the girl was stronger than she looked. "You didn't answer."

The nurse did cry then. "Oh, please, dear, don't argue with me! Let's get you into bed before you hurt yourself. Maybe Dr. Garcia won't be quite so angry."

Seeing that the younger woman was most unprofessionally disturbed, Johann let herself be urged out into the bedroom and to the bed. The little redhead caught her breath. "There! Now if you'll hold tight around my neck, I can get your legs up—you bad, bad girl! To worry me so!"

Johann did not cooperate. "Winnie."

"Yes, dear? Oh, do let me get you into bed! Doctor will be terribly angry."

"Not so fast. If you're planning on tell teacher, go do it. I can hang onto the bed, I won't fall."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The nurse looked desperate. "Are you trying to get me fired, Miss? Maybe black-listed? What have I ever done to you?"

"Winnie, dear."

"Yes?"

"You aren't going to say a word to Dr. Garcia." Johann slid an arm around the redhead's waist. "Are you?"

The nurse looked flustered but did not pull away. "Well, I should. I'm supposed to report everything."

"But you aren't going to. And I'm not going to tell him, either. Tight secret, just you and me. And no huhu for anyone."

"Well . . . I won't if you won't."

"Promise?"

"I promise."

Johann kissed her. Winnie did not dodge but seemed startled and somewhat timid. Then she caught her breath and her lips opened and the kiss progressed rapidly.

The nurse pulled her mouth free and said huskily, "I could get fired almost as quickly for *this*." She did not say what "this" was. She ignored the fact that Johann's free hand was cupping one of her breasts.

"So we'll stop and I'll get into bed—no, don't help me; I don't need it."

Johann proved it by doing it. The nurse pulled the sheet over her, at once resumed her professional *persona*. "Now let's put our clothes back on, shall we?" She stooped to retrieve them. "What a naughty girl, throwing her clothes on the floor. And giving me such a fright."

"Stuff 'em in the hamper. I'm not going to wear them."

"Now, now, dear. You needn't wear the jacket. Just the gown. Or do you want a fresh one?"

"Winnie, I'm not going to wear those silly angel robes ever again, so chuck it. You can hang up the jacket. But I won't wear a hospital gown. I'll stay raw."

"Dr. Garcia—"

"Quit threatening me with Dr. Garcia. We're past that. Aren't we?"

The nurse bit her lip. "Well . . . yes."

"It's none of his business if I sleep raw. And I shall, until something more appropriate can be bought for me. Or— Do you sleep in the house? Maybe you could lend me a nightie. A girl-type nightgown."

"Well, yes, I sleep here. But I can't lend you a gown because, well— I sleep raw myself."

"Sensible."

But there are nightgowns and negligees and things right here. In your dressing room."

"Be damned. Who ordered them?"

"I don't know, Miss Smith. They were brought in and stored there when, well, when it became clear that you were going to need them."

"Good planning. Uh, do you know if they're my size? Whatever that size is, I don't know myself."

"Oh, yes! I helped measure you."

"More good planning. Find me the most feminine nightgown in there— I might as well practice."

"Glad to."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE nurse left the bedroom. (Butch.) (Oh, nonsense, Eunice. Sure, she's a cute little trick . . . but I simply suddenly realized what treatment she would respond to. Had to dig back into my memory; I'm out of practice.) ('Butch' I said. You enjoyed it.) (Didn't *you* enjoy it?) (Sure I did. She kisses like don't-stop. But I'm not a hypocrite about it. *Who* was shocked when I said girls could be a blast? You, you dirty old hypocrite. And butch.)

(Eunice, you are out of your frimping mind. I've had most of a century to appreciate girls; do you expect me to change overnight? The time I'll feel like a queer is the first time some *man* kisses us. I'll probably faint.) (Poor Boss. Doesn't know whether he's A.C., or D.C. Never mind, dear, Eunice will coach you—as I *do* know how to kiss a man.)

(I imagine you do.) (Was there salt in that one? Never mind, I know how. *He* faints. Boss, you claimed you had done everything. *Every*thing?) (See here, little snoopy, I am not going to give you any excuse to call me both butch and pansy in the same sentence. You can have my memoirs later. But, Eunice, speaking of butch, is that what Winnie is? She certainly responded.) (More sweetheart than 'butch' is my guess, though she may stroll both sides of Gay Street. But if you were asking is she a Lez—then I would bet anything she's not. Ambi, sure, but *much* more interested in men. Haven't you watched her? Sparks.)

Winnie returned with a nightgown in each hand. "I think these two are the prettiest, Miss Smith. I thought—"

"Winnie."

"Yes, Miss Smith?"

"No, 'Miss Smith.' I mean you are not to call me Miss Smith. Not after kissing me. Or did I get the message wrong?" (Butch.) (Shut up, Eunice. She's going to help us.)

The nurse said nothing, blushed.

Johann said gently, "That's answer enough, dear. So call me—no, damn it, I don't want you to call me Johann. I need a new name. Winnie dear, what girl's name is closest to Johann?"

"Uh, Johanna."

"Mmm, yes. But there is already a Johnanna in my family. Got another?"

"Well . . . if you call yourself 'Joan' and gave it the two syllable pronunciation, it would be almost like 'Johann' except for the *J* instead of the *Y* sound."

"Perfect! You've named me. I think that makes you my godmother. Do you mind being godmother to an old, old man who has just been reborn as a woman?"

Winnie smiled. "I'm flattered."

"So call me Joan, not Miss Smith. Uh, I need a middle name. 'Eunice.'" (Why, Boss, now *I'm* flattered.) (Yes, beloved. Now shut up.) "Joan Eunice Smith. Winnie, do you know why that's my middle name?"

The nurse said slowly, "I'm not supposed to know."

"Then you do know. It's for the sweet and gracious lady who gave me this wonderful body—and I hope she can hear me wherever she is." (I *can*, Boss!) "Put down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those gowns and come here and name me with my new name. Name me formally for it's all the christening I will ever have. Then seal it."

Almost timidly the little redhead came close to the bed, bent over her patient. She said softly, "I name thee 'Joan Eunice' "—and kissed her.

Perhaps Winnie intended to make it a formal peck; Joan Eunice did not let it be. Both women were leaking tears before it was over.

JOAN patted the nurse's cheek and let her straighten up. "Thank you, dear. I'm Joan now. Joan Eunice. Hand me a tissue and you need one, too." (How was that one, Eunice?) (Butch, your technique is improving. I felt that one clear down in our toes.) (Who the hell are you calling butch, butch? My name is Joan Eunice.) (No, you're Joan and *I* am Eunice and collectively we're Joan Eunice . . . and I've never had a nicer present, Boss. Joan. And I know you're not a butch but you had better cool it with our godmother. Unless you mean business.)

"Which gown do you like . . . Joan?"

"Winnie, I don't know first verse about women's clothes. What do you think?"

"Well . . . this Cretan design is rather extreme. But you have the figure to justify it." (No, Boss! Take the one with the high neckline.) (Eunice, I thought you were proud of our bumps? They don't really sag.) (It's not that at all. Trust me, Joan; I know what I'm doing.)

"You may be right, Winnie. But it may not be the right gown for doctors and lawyers. I had better start easy, with the high neckline. Help me, please."

While they were getting Joan into a nightgown she asked, "Winnie? How did you happen to burst in on me?"

"What? Why, the displays of course. Both your heart rate and respiration were way up. Exercise. So I rushed in to check—and sure enough, my bad girl had managed to get out of bed. Oh, how you frightened me, dear!"

"Winnie, there's a hole in that story I could throw a dog through."

The nurse stiffened. "What do you mean—Joan?"

"My heart rate and respiration must have climbed a good ten minutes before you came in."

"Oh, dear! You won't tell on me? You promised."

"I did and so did you. Winnie with the sweet mouth, from now on neither of us is ever going to tell Dr. Garcia a darn thing unless *we* think he needs to know it. You and I, dear. Solid. Now tell me what happened."

"Uh . . . oh, this is silly. Whoever is on watch at the remotes isn't supposed to take his eyes off the displays even a moment. But you were doing so nicely . . . and Mrs. Sloan was taking a nap—which she needed, poor dear—and Dr. Garcia had gone to check on Mr. Salomon . . . and he takes a grim view of being sent for unless the patient needs him . . . and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

washroom is just down the hall from the displays—"

"I get it. We had the same urge at the same time. Right?"

Winnie blushed again. "I deserve to be fired. I know better than to take any chance with a patient. Patients do the darnedest things."

"You aren't ever going to be fired, you're going to be here long after Dr. Garcia leaves. If you'll stay. How do I look?"

"Simply lovely. I wouldn't have guessed it but I do think this gown does more for you than that Cretan number." (What did I tell you, Boss?) "But I'm going to put more lipstick on you. It's all gone."

"Now how in the world did *that* happen?"

Winnie giggled. "Don't ask *me*. But guess maybe I'll put on some myself before Doctor sees us. Joan? Is it all right for me to call you 'Miss Joan' when Dr. Garcia is around? He's terribly strict."

"Tell him to go soak his head. Sho', sho', honey, if it makes you feel easier. But I'm Joan when he's not around. You're my coach. You're going to make a lady out of me." (That's *my* job, Boss. And a tough one, I can see.) (So you need help with it. Don't joggle my elbow; Winnie is our secret weapon.) (Okay. But this weapon might explode.) (Look, infant, I learned to cope with women long before your grandmother was born.)

"I'd be glad to help, any way I can . . . Joan dear."

"Then you can start by convincing dear Doctor that I'm well enough for a tub bath. I stink. Ladies ought not to stink."

"Why, you had a bed bath not two hours ago!"

"I need more than a bed bath and you know it. Sell him the idea that you can help me into and out of the tub and keep me from falling. If you have trouble with him, fetch him in and I'll throw a tantrum. If he gives us grief, I'll make him scrub my back." Joan grinned. "So get lipstick on us, then go find him."

WINNIE left the room. (Joan Boss honey, see what I mean about the high neckline job? See what it does for us?) (I know that I feel somewhat more covered up. But only somewhat. Eunice, those breast panels are wicked.) (Oh, fuff, they're not even transparent, just translucent. But that's why this nightgown is so much sexier than the Cretan one. Men always mistake bare skin for sexiness. A typical male mistake.) (Maybe so, but I have never in my long life complained about bare skin.) (I won't argue, Joan, but I'm going to pick out our clothes. Until you start thinking like a woman. But I had a specific reason for picking the gown which is—superficially—more modest. So that we will have it on when Jake comes in.)

(Eunice, Jake has probably gone home. He's had a rough time.)

(So he has and what do you think I'm talking about? He's still in the house; he would not leave without saying good-by.)

(Oh, nonsense, Jake and I aren't that formal.)

(Boss, Jake is a gentleman to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his fingertips. He might feel free to duck out without formality in dealing with his old friend Johann Smith—but *not* with a lady. 'Johann' is one thing. 'Joan Eunice' is another matter.)

(But he *knows* I'm Johann.)

(So? Then *why* did he kiss our hand? Joan, I'm going to have to watch you every second; you don't know *anything* about men.)

(I spent almost a century *being* one.)

(Irrelevant. Hush up; he may be here any time, I've got to tell this bang. Joan, the last few months before I was killed I was Jake's mistress.)

(How was the old goat?)

(Is *that* all you have to say?)

(Eunice, you think I know nothing about men. Possibly true, in one sense. But *I* can teach *you* about men—from the inside—the way you can teach me about men from the outside. Jake is tough. Yet I saw him collapse twice in grief over you. Understandable that your death would upset him some. Understandable that it was a strain on him to help out in the masquerade of not letting me know that I had inherited your lovely body. Nevertheless you were just a girl he had known through business, one who helped him with my affairs. Not one he knew intimately. Yet this tough old lawyer collapsed twice. Over you. So he *must* have known you far better than anyone guessed. How? And *where*? Only one answer. In bed.)

(Not always in bed, you dirty old man with a girl's name. In bed, certainly. But lots of other places, too. In his car. In *your* car. Several times in this house—)

(Be damned! Then all my servants know it, too.)

(I doubt if they suspect. We used your study to work—and did work—and Cunningham didn't let us be disturbed any more than he would have disturbed you and me. You asked a rude question, you'll get a blunt answer. The old goat was *good*. And quite daring in grabbing every chance. We hardly missed a day until I was killed.)

(A couple of j.d.'s, you two. Well, 'My hat's off to the Duke.')

(Jealous, Boss?)

(No, envious. I wouldn't have been up to it the first day I laid eyes on you. Impossible. And now still more impossible. Just envious. The old goat.)

(Not impossible, Joan.)

(Eh?)

(I was shocked when I saw Jake. My death must have hurt him terribly. I know it did, he loved me. But we can pull him out of it, Joan, you and I—only this time we won't use your study.)

(*What*? Why that's *incest*!)

(Don't be ridiculous, dear. I was no relation to Jake and I don't think you are, either.)

(I mean it would *feel* like incest. Jake? *Jake*? Eunice, when I admitted that I supposed that I would—eventually—be 'actively female' I didn't have *Jake* in mind.)

(I did.)

(Then get it out of your mind! Forget it. Dr. Hedrick if you want to—at least I'll try to cooperate—after I get used to being female. Your former husband Joe, I owe that to you—)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Not Joe.)

(Why not? You spoke highly of him in that respect, and I always thought you thought well of him in other respects. Not urging you—hell, I can't think about sex with *any* man other than abstractly; I'm not yet reoriented. But I had already decided to go along with your need for Joe.)

(Boss, I *can't*. Not with Joe. Because he *was* my husband. To him, I'd be a zombie. A walking corpse. I doubt if he would touch us . . . and if he did, I'd be terribly tempted to tell him. Tell him I'm still here. Can't. I know it.)

(And *I* can't make it with Jake. It's the same with Jake, too, you know. A walking corpse.)

(Not quite the same. Surely, he knows we're a patchwork, your brain and my body. But he loved us both. He's loved you much longer that he's loved me. While Joe doesn't even know you.)

(*Jake* loved *me*? Eunice, you're out of your mind!)

(Impossible, dear; I don't have one to be out of. Why do you think Jake put up with your bad temper? Not for money; he's rich, even though he's not as rich as you are. Why is he still around at all? For *me*? He would have avoided seeing me—this body—had it been possible; it hurts him. He stuck because *you* needed him. Look, dear—Joan, I mean—Joan, this is your big sister Eunice talking, you listen to her. Be nice to Jake. Be a sweet girl to Jake. Then let things run easy. I'm not asking you to do anything you don't want to do—heavens, no! Jake would spot it if you forced yourself; he's no fool about women. Just be sweet. Don't be Johann, be Joan. Be little and feminine and let him take care of you.)

(Well—I'll try. Jake is going to think I'm off my rocker.)

(He's going to think you're a darling girl. It's possible he'd rather be your father than what he was to me. If so, we'll be good and let him baby us.)

She sighed. (I'll try, Eunice. But I don't know. Jake!)

(That's my good girl, Joan. Be helpless and female; Jake will do the rest.)

DR. GARCIA bustled in, came straight to the bed. "What's this about a tub bath? I thought I made it plain that you weren't to rush things."

(Don't let him argue, Joan!) (Watch me trip him!) "Oh! Doctor, you startled me so!"

"Eh? How?"

"Bursting in on me without warning. Is that nice?"

Garcia looked baffled. "Miss Smith, I've been here more than a year and I've always entered this room without ceremony. Am I to understand that you find it offensive? After all this time?"

"That's not the point, Doctor. When you first came here you were attending a helpless old man. Then you were helping Dr. Hedrick with a female patient who was paralyzed, and unconscious most of the time—and I do appreciate the care you gave that helpless patient, for I am she. But things change. I am now having to learn to be a woman and, if possible, a lady. It's not easy. Won't you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

help me by showing me the formal courtesies you show other ladies?"

Garcia reddened slightly. "A doctor doesn't have time for formalities."

(Slug him again, dearie! He's still twitching.) (I shall!) "Doctor, if I were in danger, I would expect you to rush in without buzzing; I depend on you. But you came in to tell me I can't have a bath—surely not an emergency. I'm not asking much—just asking you to think of this room, not as an old man's sickroom, but as a lady's boudoir. To help me. Please?"

Dr. Garcia said stiffly, "Very well, Miss Smith. I shall remember."

"Thank you, sir. By the way, my name is Joan Smith now; I can't go on being Johann. You might call me 'Miss Joan' to help me get used to it. Or simply Joan, as I don't want to be unnecessarily formal with my doctor, truly I don't. Just that little touch of formality that I need as training in learning how to be my new self. Will you call me Joan?"

He grudged a smile. "All right—Joan."

She gave him Eunice's best you-wonderful-man smile. "That sounds nice. And you *are* welcome anytime, Doctor, either professionally or just to visit. Which I hope you will do. Just have the nurse make sure I'm ready to receive a gentleman. Things. You know." She raised herself on an elbow and looked at him, acutely aware of her "modest" nightgown. "Such as lipstick." She wetted her lips. "Odd to have to wear it. Is it on properly? Does it look right?"

"You look lovely!"

(Cancel and erase — change 'butch' to 'tart.' You're a natural-born tart, dearie. Where's your beat?) (Stow it, sister tart; I haven't finished hustling him.) "Why, thank you, sir! Now tell me why I can't have a hot, soapy, tub bath so that I will *feel* lovely, too. I'll follow your orders, Doctor, but I would like to understand them. Can you tell me without using a lot of long medical words?"

"Well— Joan, my objection is to the tub itself. People are forever breaking legs or cracking skulls through slipping in bathtubs. And you haven't even learned to stand up, much less walk."

"True." Joan threw the sheet back, dropped her feet over the edge of the bed, sat up—controlled a slight dizziness and smiled. "Let's see if I can. Will you help me, Doctor? Arm around me perhaps?"

"Lie down!"

"Must I? I feel fine. Is there a stool? My feet don't touch—"

"Miss Sm— Joan, damn it, so help me I'm going to quit this business and buy a junk yard! Lie down while I call a nurse. Then we'll get on each side of you and let you stand up. When you find out how weak and dizzy you are, I'll expect you to go back to bed and stay there."

"Yes, Doctor," she said meekly and lay down.

Winnie answered the summons. "You rang, Doctor?"

"We're going to try a practice walk. Help me get the patient up. You take her left side."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, sir."

With too much help Joan got out of bed, stood up. The room wobbled a little but she steadied herself on Winnie while letting her arm be feather-light on the doctor's shoulder.

"How do you feel?"

"Fine. We should have music; I feel like dancing."

"Feel like it if you wish, don't try it. Slow march now and short steps." They walked toward the door, while Joan relished the thick pile of the rug against her bare feet. Walking was fun, *everything* was fun! (Eunice my love, do you realize what a perfect body this is?) (It's way out of shape. But two weeks hard work and we'll have it tuned up.) (Oh, pooh, I never felt this good even as a child.) (You'll see, Boss. Say a vertical split with our hair sweeping the floor, then hold it through ten controlled breaths—and come out of it with a slow walkover and melt on down into a full lotus with never a hurried movement. Just wait.) (You think we'll be able to do that? I was clumsy even as a boy.) (No huhu. The body remembers, dear.)

They stopped. "Now turn around slowly, and head for your bed."

"Doctor? Now that I'm up, why not head me straight for that soap and water?"

"Aren't you tired?"

"Not a bit. I didn't lean on you, did I? I thought I had been promised a real bath as soon as I was able to walk. Must I stand on my hands as well? Back away and I'll try." She let go his arm.

The doctor promptly put his arm around her waist. "No nonsense! Nurse, that tub has grab rails; make her use them."

"Yes, Doctor."

"If this patient falls, you had better head for Canada—you can find the shortest route by following me. If you're fast enough."

"Winnie won't let me fall," Joan said warmly while warmly leaning into his arm. "But if you're worried, you can come in and help. Scrub my back."

He snorted. "Ten minutes ago you bawled me out merely for walking into your bedroom unannounced."

"And if you do it again, I shall again. That's social; this is professional. Doctor, I'm well aware that you've seen my new body—professionally—many times. One more time won't kill me." She wiggled slightly in his arm.

"Scrubbing a patient's back is *not* part of my professional duties. Lukewarm tub, *Nurse*, and don't let her stay in too long."

ONCE inside the bathroom and the door shut Joan threw her arms around her nurse and giggled. "Honey, did you see his face?"

Winnie shook her head. "Joan, you don't need me to coach you in how to be female. You already know."

"Oh, but I *do* need you, dear. Because I *don't* know. I simply used on dear Doctor things that used to fluster me when I was his age—and male." She giggled again. "For a second I thought he was going to take my dare and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scrub my back." (And *I* thought you were going to lay him, right on the rug.) (Oh, be quiet, Eunice; I didn't even pinch him.) Joan let go of Winnie, stepped back and started to skin the gown over her head. "Now for a bath. Oh, boy!"

"Joan! *Please* hold on to something. Doctor might show up any second."

"Oh, pooh, he wouldn't dare. Never again." Joan turned and touched the latch switch. "Now he can't, so quit fretting."

"You mustn't lock the door. Hospital baths are never locked."

"This isn't a hospital and I'll lock my bathroom door whenever I like and if Dr. Garcia finds out I've locked it the only way he *can*– by trying to walk in—and dares to mention it, I'll scream my head off to Jake Salomon and there'll be a change in doctors. Winnie dear, I wasn't a cranky old man more years than I care to think about without learning how to get my own way. I just have to use different weapons now. Want to peel off that uniform and hang it in the dressing room? I not only may splash you but this end is going to fill up with steam."

"No, Joan—lukewarm tub. You heard him."

"I heard him and it's going to be the temperature *I* like and that's another thing he'll never know and you know that I'm lively as a frog and not the weak kitten he insists on thinking I am; a hot tub won't hurt me. If you want to get your uniform clammy, that's your business. Better yet, climb into the tub with me. It's big and, short as I am now, I might slide under and drown, alone."

"I shouldn't," Winnie said slowly.

"Isn't that a horrid thought? Patient faints in tub and drowns before nurse can reach her. Not good enough for flash news but they might mention it on the late-late-late early news."

"Joan! You're teasing me." (You sure are, Boss. Erase and correct again— Both tart *and* butch.) (Fiddlesticks, Eunice. That's a big enough tub for all three of us.)

Winnie bit her lip and slowly unfastened her smock. Joan turned away and started filling the tub, adjusted the temperature and avoided watching her.

AN HOUR later Joan was seated in an easy chair, her feet on a stool. To the nightgown had been added a filmy negligee and a pair of high-heeled boudoir pumps. Her hair had been arranged, her face had been most carefully made up and she was lavishly scented with a cologne labeled "April Mist" but which deserved the title of "Criminal Assault." Her toe nails were trimmed, not to Eunice's satisfaction but well enough for the time being. Best of all, she was enjoying the euphoria of a woman who is utterly clean, scented and powdered, and dressed attractively.

Beds had been switched; the room no longer held any flavor of sickroom, and Joan found that this greatly increased her feeling of wellbeing. Eunice's stenodesk had been restored to its usual spot be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yond Johann's baby grand piano, Joan having learned that it was in her study where it had last been used, and had told Cunningham to have it brought in. It did not fit the room—but it fitted her notion of what the room should be; it was homey, it belonged.

She was alone, Winnie having gone to invite Mr. Salomon to dine with his hostess-ward. Joan sighed with satisfaction. (Feel better, hon? I do.) (Heavens, yes. But why did you lose your nerve?) (Oh, piffle, Eunice! I never intended to seduce her.) (Liar. Hypocrite. Dirty old man. You had her all set. Then you went chicken. I've met men like you before, dearie—talk a good game, then lose their nerve in the clutch. Cowardly Casanovas. Pfui!)

(Nonsense! You don't shoot ducks on water. If I ever make a real pass at her—I'm not saying I will but I admit she's a cuddlesome little bundle—) (She is indeed!) (Oh, shut up! If I ever do, I'll give her a sporting chance—not grab her when she dasn't scream.) ('Sporting chance' my tired back. Listen to your big sister, Joan—sex isn't a sport, it's a way to be happy. There is *nothing* more exasperating to a woman than to be ready to give in—then have the matter dropped. You'll find out. You'll cry in your pillow and hate every man alive. Till the next time, that is.)

(Eunice? You've never had that sort of turn-down, have you? I don't believe it.) (Happens to every woman, Joan. Men are sissies. If we women weren't so willing, if we didn't just plain lead 'em by the hand, the race would die out.)

(Uh— You know more about being a woman than I do—) (Lots more!) (—so let's talk about specifics. We're clean now and I know we're pretty; I checked us in the big glass and you agreed. But it isn't the job you used to turn out. I don't mean body paint, wouldn't be appropriate now anyhow. But what does it take? Just that tuning up? Exercise?)

(More than that, Boss—although exercise is essential. You're talking about a professional job?) (Yes. The works.) (Well, I used to do myself—but I had had lots of practice, plus expert help from Joe. But let's say you want the best and don't care what it costs—) (Certainly! What's money? I can't get rid of it.) (All right, say you retain Helena Rubinstein, Limited, or some other top glamor shop. Say you phone and tell them to send a full team. They would send an art director—male, but he may not be all that male and he's seen more female bodies unmade-up than an undertaker—and he doesn't touch you; he's too high up. He creates. And bosses. Won't look at you until several others get you ready. Mmm, bath girl, masseuse, manicurist, pedicurist, coiffeuse, depilatrix, *parfumiste*, face and skin team of at least four, costume designer, highlight and accent specialist, and assistants for all of these if you expect the job done in less than all day. If you put a time limit on it, the price goes up—and if you don't, the price goes up.)

(Say that again?)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(It's like taxes. Any way you play it the price goes up. Boss, we don't need them. With what I know and the chassis we have to work with and a good lady's maid, you can be as glamorous as you like. I don't know where you would find a creative paint man equal to Joe; nevertheless there are good ones for hire. We can shop the market, we'll find one.)

(Eunice, I had no idea that being a woman was so complicated.)

(Relax, Boss. Being a woman is easier than being a man—and *lots* more fun. I'm going to teach you to be a twenty-first century woman—and I'd be pleased if you would teach me how it was to be a twentieth century man, and we'll close that silly 'generation gap.' Understand each other as well as loving each other.)

(Beloved.)

(I think you're pretty nice, too, you cranky old bastard. With your brain and my body, we make a fine team. We'll get by.) (I'm sure we will, darling.) (We will. The first thing we need is a *good* lady's maid—scarce as whales in Kansas. We'll probably have to train one. Then lose her as soon as she's worth anything.) (Eunice, do we need a maid? You used to do yourself.) (I did, and kept house for Joe, and was your secretary and worked any hours you wanted me. But you're not used to that, Boss. You had a valet.) (Yes, of course. But I was very old and didn't have time to waste on such things. Eunice, one of the worst parts about getting old is that the days get shorter while the demands on your time increase. I didn't want a valet; I was forced into it. Didn't enjoy being dependent on a secretary, either—until *you* came along.)

(Dear Boss. Joan, we *will* need a maid. But not a secretary until you're active in business again—) (Won't be!) (We'll see. You may have to be. But may not need a secretary unless you get pushed for time. I can handle it. And thanks for having Betsy brought in; it makes me feel at home to see her again. My stenodesk, I mean. Pet name.)

('Betsy' huh? I always thought of it as 'the Octopus.')

(Why, what a nasty name to apply to a nice, respectable, well-behaved machine! Boss, I'm not sure I'm speaking to you. I'm glad Betsy isn't switched on; if she had heard that, her feelings would be hurt.)

(Eunice, don't be silly. I wonder what's keeping Jake?)

(Probably cutting his toenails. Lesson number two in how to be a woman: Men are almost always late but you never, never, never notice it—because they pride themselves on promptness. Boss, you didn't quite promise Winnie to stay in this chair—when she gave you strict orders.) (Of course not. Because it might not suit me. And it doesn't; I want to try the eighty-eight. Eunice, two gets you seven it hasn't been kept in tune—and I gave Cunningham orders about both pianos, this baby and the concert grand downstairs, not five years ago. So let's see.)

SHE stood up, did not notice that high heels gave her no trouble,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and glided gracefully over to the little piano, sat down and opened it—let the first bars of Dvorak's Slavonic Dance #10 run through her mind, then started to play—

—and achieved a clash of noise.

"What the hell!" She looked at the keyboard, then hit middle C with her right forefinger. It sounded okay—and so did the C an octave below it. Several one- and two-finger experiments convinced her that the piano was not at fault. Yet to strike a single chord required studying the keyboard, then carefully positioning each finger by sight.

Presently she managed a slow, uneven, faulty version of "Chopsticks" by watching the keyboard and controlling her hands so hard they trembled. She quit before reaching its undistinguished coda and crashed the keys with both hands. (There go ten years of piano lessons!) (What did you expect, Boss? I was never much good even with a guitar.) (Well, I'm glad Mama didn't hear that—she always wanted me to be a concert pianist. Eunice, why the devil didn't you study piano as a kid?) (Because I was too busy studying boys! A much more rewarding subject. Joan, if you want to play the piano again, we can learn. But we'll have to start almost from scratch. It's in your head, I know; I could hear it. But to get from there down into our hands—*my* hands, dear—will probably take more patient work than slimming our hips.)

(Doesn't matter, not really.) She got up from the piano bench. (Boss. Just a sec. While we're here, let's warm up Betsy and give her a check run.) (Huh? I know nothing about a stenodesk. It'll be worse than the piano.) (We'll see.)

She moved over and sat down at the stenodesk. (Well, Eunice? Which way to the Egress?) (Relax, Boss. The body remembers. Just say 'Dictation, Eunice,' then recite something you know. Think about what you're dictating.)

(Okay.) "Dictation, Eunice. 'Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition. . .'"

Deftly her hands touched the switches, swiveled the microphone in time to catch the first word, required the machine to listen & hold while she inserted punctuation, used erase & correct when the machine spelled "fourth" rather than "forth"—all without hurrying.

She stopped and looked at the result. (Be durned! *How*, Eunice?) (Don't ask, dear—or we might get fouled up in the dilemma of the centipede. But Betsy is purring like a kitten; she's glad I'm back.) (Well, so am I. Uh, Eunice, this machine—Betsy, I mean—has access to the Congressional Library St. Louis Annex, does it not? —she not?) (Certainly. Hooked into the Interlibrary Net, rather, though you can restrict a query to one library.)

(Better query just one. I want to find out what is known about memory and how it works.) (All right. I'm interested, too; I think my memory is spotty. Can't be sure. But on a search-of-literature

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it's best to let Betsy handle it through preprograms—ask for references, followed by abstracts, followed by items selected from abstracts . . . else, on a generalized question like that, thousands of books would be transmitted and poor Betsy would gulp them down until she was constipated, and stop and not do anything until her temporary memory was erased.)

(You know how, I don't. Uh, stick in a restriction not to bother with behaviorist theories. I know all about Pavlov and his robots I care to know, namely that every time a dog salivates a behaviorist psychologist has to ring a bell.)

(All right. Boss? Can we spend a little more money?) (Go ahead, buy the Pyramids. What do you want, dearest?) (Let's have a Triple-A-One snoop search run on me. Eunice Branca, I mean—the 'me' that used to be.) (Why, beloved? If you've been selling government secrets they can't touch you now.) (Because. It might fill some of those holes I think I have in my memory . . . and it might turn up something you've heard from me since I came back but which was not in the security report you got on me originally. Then you would *know*, dear . . . and could stop worrying that I may be only a figment of your imagination.)

(Eunice, if I'm crazy, the only thing that worries me is that some damned shrink might cure me. Then you would go away.)

(That's sweet of you, Boss. But I won't go away; I promised.)

(And even if I *am* crazy, it just makes me fit that much better into the present world. Eunice, don't you remember *anything* between being killed and waking up here?)

THE inner voice was silent a moment. (Not really. There were dreams and I think you were in them. But there was one that does not seem like a dream; it seems as real as this room. But if I tell you, you'll think *I* am crazy.) (If so, it doesn't detract from your charm, dear.) (All right but don't laugh. Joan, while I was away, I was in this—place. There was an old, old Man with a long white beard. He had a great big book. He looked at it, then He looked at me and said, 'Daughter, you've been a naughty girl. But not too naughty, so I'm going to give you a second chance.')

(A dream, Eunice. Anthropomorphism, straight out of your childhood Sunday School.) (Maybe, Boss. But here I am and I *do* have a second chance.)

(Yes, but God didn't give it to you. Eunice my own, I don't believe in God nor Devil.)

(Well . . . you haven't been dead—and *I* have. Truly I don't know what I believe; I guess I wasn't dead long enough to find out. But do you mind if we pray occasionally?)

(Jesus H. Christ!)

(Stop that, Joan! Or I'll use every one of those words you consider 'unladylike'. It's not much to ask.)

(I'm henpecked. Okay. If it's a beautiful church, with good music, and the sermon isn't over ten minutes.) (Oh, I didn't mean in a *church*. Can't stand 'em. Filled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with bad vibrations. I mean pray by ourselves, Joan. I'll teach you.)

(Oh. All right. Now?)

(No, I want to get these search orders in. You think about something else; I don't want centipede trouble—think about Winnie all slickery with soapsuds.) (A pious thought. Much better than prayer.) (Dirty old man. How do *you* know—I'll bet you've never prayed in your life.) (Oh, yes, I have, dearest—but God had gone fishing.) (So think about Winnie.)

She was busy for several minutes. Then she patted the machine affectionately and switched it off. (Well, did you?) (Did I what?) (Did you think about Winnie? Lecher.) (I took advantage of the unusual peace and quiet to contemplate the wonders of the universe.) (So?) (I thought about Winnie.) (I know you did; I was right with you. Joan, for a girl who is, in one sense at least, a virgin, you have an unusually low and vivid imagination.) (Aw, shucks, I'll bet you say that to all the girls.) (The stark truth, Joan sweet—with your imagination I can hardly wait for you to start us on that 'actively female' career. In all the wrestling I've done I've never had a man—or a girl—grab me the way you were thinking about.) (Oh. Learned that one from a respectable housewife, clear back in my teens. A most charming lady.) (Hmm! Perhaps I was born too late for the real action.) (So I've been trying to tell you. Did you get those orders in?) (Certainly, Boss, when did I ever miss? Let's get back to our chair; our back is tired.)

JOAN EUNICE negotiated the thirty feet back to her chair without remembering that she had kicked off her pumps to handle the lower controls of the stenodesk more easily; the rug simply felt good to her bare feet. Then she did notice as she sat down in the big easy chair and folded her legs in the awkward, elegant, and surprisingly comfortable lotus position. But it did not seem worth while to go get them.

The door buzzer sounded. "It's me, Winnie."

"Come in, dear."

The nurse entered. "Mr. Salomon asked me to tell you that he will be in to see you in a few minutes. But he can't stay for dinner."

"He'll stay. Come here and kiss me. What did you tell Cunningham?"

"Dinner for two, in here, just as you said—to be served when you rang. But Mr. Salomon seemed quite firm about leaving."

"I still say he'll stay. But if he doesn't, you come eat dinner with me. Would you fetch my pumps? Over there on the floor beyond the piano."

The nurse looked, fetched the pumps, stood over Joan Eunice and sighed. "Joan, I don't know what to do about you. You've been a bad girl again. Why didn't you ring?"

"Don't scold me, dear. Here, sit on the stool and lean against my knees and talk. There. Now tell me— By any chance were you ever a lady's maid before you took nurse's training?"

"No. Why?"

"You did such a fine job of tak-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing care of me in the bath and getting me pretty. Well, it was just a thought. I don't suppose a nurse—a professional woman—would consider a job as a maid. No matter how high the salary. But Dr. Garcia is going to insist that I have a nurse after he leaves. I don't need a nurse and you know it. But dear Doctor will insist. I *do* need a maid; I won't be able to dress myself at first—women's clothes are so different. Not to mention knowing nothing about makeup. Or buying women's clothes. What are you paid now, Winnie?"

The nurse told her.

"Goodness! No wonder they're always saying there's a shortage of nurses. I can't hire an in-house guard at that price. What would you think of staying on as my nurse—but actually doing things for me that a maid would do and I don't know how to do—at three times your present salary? With whatever you wish paid in cash so that you won't have to report it?"

The redhead looked thoughtful. "How would you want me to dress, Joan?"

"That's up to you. Your white nurse's uniform, if you prefer it—since you'll be my nurse in Dr. Garcia's eyes. Or what you wish. There's a bedroom through that door where my valet used to sleep. With a nice bath—and another room beyond it which we can redo as your living room. Redecorate all three rooms to suit your taste. Your private apartment."

(Boss, what was that about not shooting ducks on water?) (Stuff it, Eunice. If she takes the bait, it's better than hiring some illit and having to train her—and then have her steal the jewelry and drop out about the time she's some use). (Oh, I see advantages. But you place Winnie one unlocked door away and she'll be in bed with you before you can say 'Sappho.' *You* may not want men in our life—but *I* do.) (Oh, nonsense! She's already thinking about the money. If she takes the job, she'll be more standoffish—she'll start calling us 'Miss' again.)

"Miss Joan? It'll really be my *own* apartment? I can entertain?"

"Of course, dear. Private. Oh, Cunningham's staff will clean and so forth, any service you want. Breakfast tray, whatever. Or never enter it if you prefer it that way."

"It sounds heavenly. I'm sharing a room with two other girls. . . at a rent that's horrid because it's inside an enclave. Safe—but I never have any *privacy*."

"Winnie. Look at me, dear, and lay it on the line. The bed in there now is, I believe, a single. Would you like to have it replaced with a big, big double bed?"

The girl blushed. "Uh, it would be nice."

"So stop blushing. I won't know you have a visitor unless you tell me; that door is soundproof. Of course visitors have to be identified and checked for weapons, just as visitors to an enclave have to be—but that simply means you must vouch for a visitor to my chief guard the first visit. But I won't know it unless you choose to tell me. The in-house staff all have visitors. But security is my chief guard's worry, not mine."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But he does have to show his ID?"

"You still would have to vouch for him to Chief O'Neil but—Hold the count down. Did you mean he would rather *not* show an ID? Is he married, or something?"

Winnie blushed again, did not answer. Joan Eunice went on, "Nobody's business, dear. This is a private home, not a government compound. You vouch for him, that's enough. Chief O'Neil doesn't trust IDs; they're often faked. But he has a photographic eye. Are you going to stay with me? As nurse in residence, or lady's companion, or social secretary, or whatever you want?"

"Lady's maid. If I'm to be your maid, Miss Joan, I'd rather that your staff knew it and no pretense. And dress as your maid. What sort of uniform? Traditional? Or Acapulco? Or something in between?"

"Oh, not traditional, surely; you have such pretty legs. All-out Acapulco, if you like."

Winnie looked pleased. "I might go all out. A girl gets tired of these white coveralls." (Joan! Tell her not to use an all-out Acapulco paint job. Bad for her skin.)

"Suit yourself, dear. But don't use a lot of paint. Bad for your skin."

"Oh, I know! I'm a real redhead, you probably noticed. I can't even sunbathe. I was thinking of a little black frill skirt with a white lace apron about the size of a saucer. Little perky maid's cap, white on a black ribbon. Cling-On cups, in black. Transparent? Or opaque?"

"Whichever suits you, Winnie. High heels?"

"Uh, translucent, I guess, like the panels in that nightie. High heels, certainly, or the effect is lost—I can wear real stilts if I'm barefooted most of the time. Then just enough paint for accent. There are lovely decals that go on in no time and come right off with cold cream. Butterflies and flowers and things. Cheap, too. Everything I mentioned I can buy in disposables. I'll look like a proper lady's maid, yet not spend more time getting dressed than I do in putting on this smock and tights."

"You'll look cute, dear. Going to dress up in a maid's outfit and model it for your friend?"

Winnie started to blush again, then grinned. "I certainly am! And let him take it off me, too!" (Cheers!) (Eunice, you have a one-track mind.) (You should know, dearie—it's *your* mind.)

A FEW moments later Winnie announced Mr. Salomon, then left. The lawyer came toward Joan solemnly, took the hand she extended and bowed over it. "How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Disappointed," Joan answered soberly. "Because my oldest and dearest friend hasn't time to dine with me my first day up. But physically I feel fine. Weak, but that's to be expected."

"Sure you're not overdoing?"

"I'm sure. My respiration and heartbeat are being telemetered—if I weren't all right, someone would come in and order me to bed. Truly, I'm all right, Jake—and I won't get strong unless I *do*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stay out of bed. But how about *you*, old friend? I have been terribly worried."

"Oh, I'm all right. Just made a fool of myself, Johann."

"You did not make a fool of yourself . . . and I feel certain Eunice knows it, Jake." (Watch it, Boss!) (Pipe down.) "You could have paid her no finer tribute than those honest tears." Joan found her own tears starting; she encouraged them while ignoring them. "She was a sweet and gallant lady, Jake, and it touched me more than I can say to learn that you appreciated her wonderful qualities as much as I did. Jake—please sit down, if only for a moment. There is something I *must* ask you."

"Well . . . all right. Can't stay long."

"Whistle that chair closer and face me. Uh, a glass of sherry? Doctor says I may have it—and I find that I need it. That Spanish cocktail sherry, dry as your wit. Will you do me the honor of pouring for us?"

Joan waited until the lawyer had filled their glasses and had seated himself. She raised her glass and at the same time raised her chest, letting those "wicked" panels do their best. "A toast, Jake—no, don't get up. The same toast, Jake—always the same toast from now on whenever you and I drink together . . . but silently." She took a sip and put her glass down. "Jake—"

"Yes . . . Johann?"

"'Joan' please—I can't be 'Johann' any longer. Jake, you know that I never expected to live through any such operation? It was a—device. A legal device."

"Yes, Joha—Yes, Joan, I knew. That's why I helped."

"I knew. The most generous act of friendship I have ever known. What is it the Japanese name it?—the friend who helps, when it is necessary to die. Never mind. Jake, look me in the eye. Do you know, deep in your heart, that I would rather be dead . . . than to have lived through it by this incredible circumstance? Be alive . . . at *her* expense? Do you *know* that, Jake? Or must I live still another life, hating myself?"

Salomon raised his eyes, met hers firmly. "Yes—Joan. I know it. It was no fault of yours . . . you must not hate yourself. Uh . . . *Ennice wouldn't want you to*!"

"I know! Weep, dear Jake; don't hold back your tears—see, I am not holding back mine. Just try not to go to pieces, or I will, too. Jake, each of us would happily have died rather than let this happen. I am as certain of it about you as I hope you are about me. I don't think I could stand it if you had not reassured me. Look at me—a lovely body and young—yet I am almost ninety-five years old and have not one friend left alive . . . but you."

"You'll make more friends."

"I wonder if I can. The span is great, perhaps too great. I feel as the Wandering Jew must have felt, alive beyond his allotted time. His name—Aha—something. My memory is not as good as this young body. But I can't forget one question which I *must* ask. Jake, is there any possibility that Eunice's husband had something to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

do with her death? That prize I put up, that blood money—*did it tempt him*?"

(Boss, Boss, you're way off base. I know!) (Sorry, beloved, more sorry than I can say. But I must have *proof*.) "Jake? *Did I entice a murder*?"

THE lawyer shook his head. "I'm astounded. But of course you don't know the circumstances. You enticed *nothing*. I wrote that offer most carefully. Were there any guilt I would share it. There was none."

"How do you *know*?" (Drop it, Boss. Please!)

"Mr. Branca was in Philadelphia, visiting his mother." (You see, Boss?) "I had to find him to get the post-death ratification. Took three days, while both of you were kept ready for surgery. Joe Branca didn't know she was dead. Hell of a job even to find him. Three long days."

"Three days. Why wasn't I told?"

"And *waste* Eunice's death? Are you crazy? You were unconscious; Garcia put you under as soon as I notified him that a body was going to be ready. Then that dreadful wait. I need *your* forgiveness, too, for—Joan—no, 'Johann!' I hated you . . . for being alive when *she* was dead. But I pushed on—for *her* sake. Oh, I got over it, it was a sick hate. I knew better."

"Do you hate me now?"

"Eh?" Salomon looked at her, in sorrow. "No. You are not only my old friend, who has always been honest and decent under his crusty exterior—whose virtues outweighed his faults." Salomon managed to smile. "Though sometimes just barely. But also you are the only tie I have left to her."

"Yes. You may find me better tempered now, Jake. It's easier to smile, easier to be patient, than it was in that old wreck of a body I had. But, Jake, about Joe Branca. All right, he was in Philadelphia. But could he have *arranged* it?"

"No."

"You're certain?"

"Certain. Joha—Joan, it's that million dollars that worries you, fear that it might have started a chain of events. When they located Joe Branca, I had to jet there and get that piece of paper. He was dazed. Couldn't believe it. But accepted the fact. But *not* the money. I couldn't get him to sign the post-death authorization without first preparing another document, waiving the money. The escrow trustee—Chase Manhattan—was instructed by Joe to pay it to the Rare Blood Club—his idea—as a memorial to Eunice Evans Branca." (Oh, Boss! I'm crying.) (We all are.) (But, Boss—Joe must be starving.) (We'll take care of it.)

She sighed. "I'll be damned."

"Perhaps. And perhaps myself. But I don't think Joe Branca will be. He's an unworldly man—Joan. From a slum family. A flower in the muck. I couldn't even get him to accept a lesser sum. He insisted on paying for witnessing and notarizing his mark, and the tax stamp on the assignment—and it took almost every dime he could dig up. He just shook his head and said, 'Broke don't scare me.' "

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Jake, we must take care of him."

"I don't think you can, Joan. In his own odd way he is as proud as she was. But I did one thing. In searching for him I had to get a court order to open their studio—indispensable it turned out, as an old letter from his mother gave us the clue that located him. But I learned that the rent was almost due . . . the corporation's rent agent wanted to know how soon the lease was going to lapse—he assumed that, with *her* dead, the rent would not be paid. So I covered the matter for the moment, then when I got back, I bought the lease. As long as Joe chooses to stay, he won't be asked for rent. Then I checked around and located her bank account and arranged with a friendly judge to let me guarantee the matter and had it assigned to Joe without bothering him with legal formalities. The little dear was smart about money—a nice sum, enough to keep him eating a couple of years I think." (All gone in a couple of months, *I* think. Boss, Joe doesn't understand money. A bank account isn't real to him.) (Don't worry, darling, Jake and I will handle it.)

She sighed. "I feel reassured, Jake. But distressed about her husband. We must look into it. If he's that unworldly, then there must be some way to subsidize him without his knowing it."

"All right, Joan, we will try. But Joe Branca taught me—at my age—that there are things money cannot buy. Not if the prospective seller is indifferent to money."

"Will you have more sherry? And may I have another drop? If you can't stay, I think I'll ask to be put to bed and right to sleep. Skip dinner."

"Oh, but you must eat, Joan. For your strength. Look, if I stay, will you eat?"

She gave him Eunice's best sun-coming-up smile. "Yes! Yes, Jake dear! Thank you."

DINNER was informal, service only by Cunningham and two assistants. Joan did her best to simulate a charming, gracious hostess—while trying not to appear greedy; everything tasted so *wonderful*! But she waited until coffee had been served and Jake had refused a perfecto and accepted a glass of port, and she then could say, "Thank you, Cunningham, that will be all," before returning to personal matters.

Once they were alone she said, "Jake, when will I be up for a competency hearing?"

"Eh? Any time you feel well enough. Are you in a hurry?"

"No. I would be utterly content to be your ward the rest of my life."

Her lawyer smiled slightly. "Joan, by the actuarial tables you now have a life expectancy of about sixty years; mine is more like ten or twelve."

"Well. . .that's hard to answer. But will you go on as before as my de facto manager? Or am I asking too much?"

Salomon studied his glass. "Joan. . .once the court dissolves this guardian-and-ward relationship, there is no reason why you should not manage your affairs."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Joan! Change the subject; he's trying to leave us!) (So I know! Keep quiet!) (Tell him your middle name!) "Jake. Jake dear... look at me. Look hard and keep on looking. That's better. Jake—is it that you would rather *not* see me...as I am now?"

The lawyer said nothing. She went on, "Isn't it better to get used to what *is*...than to run away from it? Wouldn't she—Eunice—want you to stay?" (Keep slugging, Sis—he *wants* to stay.)

"It isn't that simple...Joan."

"Nothing ever is. But I don't thing you *can* run away from it any more than I can—for I won't stop *being* what I am—her body, my mind—and you will always know it. All you accomplish by leaving is to deprive me of my one friend and the only man on earth I trust utterly. What does it take to change my name?"

"Eh?"

"Just what I said. I changed my surname from 'Schmidt' to 'Smith' when I enlisted on December eighth, nineteen forty-one, simply by spelling it that way to a recruiting sergeant. No one has bothered me about it since. This time perhaps it must be formal, considering the thousands of places where my signature appears. It is technically a sex-change case, is it not? A court takes judicial notice, or some such, and it's made a matter of record?"

Salomon slipped into his professional *persona* and relaxed. "Yes, of course; I had not thought about *that* aspect—too many other details on my mind. Joan, your earlier name change was legal—although informal—because any person is free to call himself by any name, without permission of a court, as long as there is no criminal intent—to defraud, deceive, evade responsibility, avoid taxes, whatever. You can call yourself Joan—or Johann—or Miniver Cheever—and that is your name, as long as your purpose is innocent. And pronounce as you like. Knew of a case once of a man who spelled his name Zaustinski and pronounced it Jones and went to the trouble of publishing the odd pronunciation as a legal notice—although he did not have to; a name may be pronounced in any fashion its owner chooses."

"Why did he do it, Jake?"

"His grandmother's will required him to change his name in order to inherit—but did not specify how he must pronounce it. Joan, in your case a formal change of name is advisable, but it might be best to wait until you are no longer my ward. But de facto your new name is already what you say it is."

"Then my name is now Joan Eunice Smith."

SALOMON knocked over his glass of port. He made quite a busyness of mopping it up. Joan said, "Jake, let it be, no importance. I did not mean to shock you. But don't you see the necessity? It's a tribute to *her*, a public acknowledgment of my debt to her. Since I can never pay it, I want to publish it, place it on the wall for all to see, like a Chinese man's debt to his tong. Besides that, ninety-five percent of me *is*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eunice. . .and only five percent is old Johann now named Joan and even that fraction no one can see, only surgeons have seen it. Lastly but by no means least—Jake dear, look at me—if you ever forget that fraction and call me Eunice, it won't matter; it's my name. And if you *intentionally* call me 'Eunice,' it *will* matter, for I shall be pleased and flattered. And any time it suits you to call me 'Joan Eunice,' it will make me happy, as I will be *certain* you have done it intentionally—and accepted me as I am."

"Very well. . .Joan Eunice."

She smiled. "Thank you. Jake. I feel happier than I have felt since I first knew. I hope you do."

"Um. Yes, I think so. It's a good chance—Joan Eunice."

"Did you get wine on your clothes? If so, let Cunningham see to it. Jake, is there any reason for you to go clear out to Safe Harbor tonight? I'm sure Cunningham can find you clean socks or whatever."

"Goodness, Joan—Joan Eunice—I've been here two nights already."

"Do you think three will wear out your welcome? You can't wear it out."

"And the drive isn't that far, as I placed my house for sale with the enclave trustees months ago. I have rooms at the Gibraltar Club now. Good service, central location, none of the fiddin' worries of a householder."

"I see your point. Hmm, must remember to resign from the Gib myself." She smiled. "They'll never let me past the ladies' lounge—now."

The lawyer said dryly, "I took the liberty of withdrawing you from membership shortly after I became your guardian—Joan Eunice."

She laughed in delight. "And me a founding member! This is delicious—souls and honks and thirds all welcome. . .but females are second-class citizens. Jake, dear, I'm going to have to get used to a lot of things."

"I suppose so—Joan Eunice."

"So I'll need you more than ever. Where are you sleeping?"

"The Brown room."

"Cunningham must be slipping. He should have put you in the Green suite."

"Well. . .the Green suite has been used for hospital equipment and supplies. I authorized it."

"Then you can just unauthorize it as that is *your* suite. They can store than stuff somewhere else. Or remove it, as little of it will be needed from now on."

"Hedrick had most of it removed the middle of the day."

"All right, you stay in the Brown room tonight, then tomorrow Cunningham can get the Green suite in shape for you."

"Joan Eunice, what leads you to think I'm moving in here? I'm not."

"I didn't say you were. I said that the Green suite is yours. Whether you stay a night or a year. Yours without invitation, yours to come and go without bothering to say hello or goodbye. Although I hope it will suit you to say hello to me frequently. Is Hubert, my former valet, still around?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes. He's tended me the last two nights."

"From now on he'll tend the Green suite and take care of you whenever you honor us with your presence. Jake, you had better move some clothes here."

"Damn it— Pardon me, Joan Eunice."

"For saying 'Damn it'? It's a strange day when my oldest friend must curb his language in my presence. Jake, I've heard you use language that would blister paint at forty yards—and *at* me, not merely in my presence."

"True. But I must now remember that you are a lady, Joan Eunice."

"Please yourself. I'm going to have more trouble learning to be a lady than you will have in remembering that I am supposed to be one. If you slip, ignore it—for you know that I never took a back seat to any muleskinner in other days. You were saying?"

"Well, I was saying, 'Damn it, we must remember your reputation'—Joan Eunice."

"My *what*? My reputation as a *woman*? I doubt if I have one—other than as a sideshow freak. Doesn't worry me."

"You're not in the news, Joan Eunice, since shortly after the operation. Oh, you will be again when we go into court. . .and perhaps sooner, when someone in your household staff or Dr. Hedrick's staff, spills the fact of your recovery."

"So I'll be a sideshow freak again and who cares? A nine-day wonder lasts only a couple of days now; they wear out faster than they did when I was a kid. Jake, I haven't worried about what anyone said about me for over half a century. The image our P.R. men built up was for the Company, not for me personally. As for Mrs. Grundy—I think she's dead. The present generation does not care about her opinion—a change for the better in a world otherwise deteriorating. I doubt if Eunice ever heard of Mrs. Grundy." (Sure have, Boss. My fourth-grade teacher. Used to shack with the vice-principal until his wife found out. We kids giggled over it—but *you* would have liked her. . .you dirty old darling. Keep working on Jake, dear—time to back away closer.) (Who's driving this car?) (I am.)

MR. SALOMON said thoughtfully, "I think you are right about this younger generation, Joan Eunice. Only people my age and older give such matters a thought. But *you* know that I should not live under your roof now. And so do I."

"Jake, I am not trying to force you. Nor am I trying to compromise you—"

"Eh? *Me*? It's *your* reputation I was thinking of. With your servants, at least."

(Why, the old hypocrite. Ask him about the time he crowded me into a cloak closet with Cunningham almost breathing down our necks. Go on, I dare you. Oh, he's a one, that one—courage under fire.) "Jake, that is sweet of you but I don't give a triple damn how my servants gossip in the kitchen. But I am able to protect *you* from gossip, sir. I have acquired the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most conventional of Victorian chaperonage—a respectable lady's maid. She'll sleep just through that door, where Hubert used to sleep. If it frets you, she can always be present when you and I are together." (Hey, what is this? Trying to get Winnie into the act? She might go for it—Jake won't. Watch it, dear.) (Quit kibitzing, Eunice.)

The lawyer raised his brows. "You've hired a maid already? Surprising. Though you never were one to dilly-dally. Or did you shift around part of your in-house staff?"

"Some of both, Jake. I anticipated that Dr. Garcia will insist on my having a trained nurse...so I persuaded one of the nurses to stay on, in both capacities. Winnie. You've seen her, the little redhead."

"Possibly I have."

('Possibly' he says. *All* you men are hypocrites. If he hasn't patted her butt, he's thought about it.)

"I'm lucky to get her. Intelligent. Educated. Able to teach me things I must know and, being a nurse, used to caring for people even more than a maid does. I used the usual argument—money—but I was careful to respect her professional pride; she'll still be my nurse, she'll lady's-maid me as a friendly favor. I think she may be in bed. But she would get up and chaperone us if asked. Shall I send for her?"

"What? Oh, don't be silly, Joan Eunice. You're making a mountain of a mole hill."

"It seemed to me that you were, Jake. I do feel defenseless as a woman...even though I was far more vulnerable as a sick old man than I am now in this strong young body. But I feel *safe* with you present—and not at all safe when you are away. Jake, I can't urge you to live here...but can't you see what a favor it would be to me? As well as— How many rooms do you have at the Gib?"

"Two. Adequate for my needs."

"The rooms there aren't large ...whereas the living room of the Green suite is as large as this room. We could cut a door from it into the upstairs library and it could be your study. Move anything into it you need for my affairs or your own—plenty of room for files or books. Jake, I don't need this big mausoleum any more than you needed your house. But if I tried to sell it, I couldn't get ten percent of what it cost; I built it during the worst of the Riot Years and the cost doesn't show, it's a prettied-up fortress, stronger than police barracks. Well, we may have such years again, I may yet be glad I spared no expense. In the meantime it's big and safe and comfortable, and you might as well use it. When you wish, I mean, especially when you work on my affairs."

"Well, I have been working on some of your affairs here in the house. Uh, Joan Eunice, as your guardian, I had to take over management of your household."

"Hasn't Cunningham saved you from such picayune worries? I must speak to him."

"Well...yes, he has and I've let him go on as before; I've made no changes. But I have had to look over the household books and au-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thorize charges and confound it, they're stealing you blind. Cunningham especially."

"Good!"

"What's good about it?"

"Jake, you told me that it was impossible to spend my income. If my butler is black-marketing two-thirds of what he buys for me and pocketing the proceeds—and he always has—then he's anxious to keep his job. Which means that he has to please *me*. Jake, can you think of a cheaper way to buy the nearest thing to loyalty that can be bought? Let him steal. Do not bind the mouths of the kine who tread the grain."

"Bad precedent. Corrupts the country."

"The country *is* corrupt. But 'it is the only game in town;' we have no choice. The problem is always how to live in a decadent society. Jake, I want you to live here. I hope you will live here. It will make me feel happy and *safe* for you to be under the same roof. But don't worry about my reputation—and Winnie is here to protect yours. Most certainly don't think about such trivia as household expenses; just close your eyes and sign. But don't hesitate to chew out Cunningham if the service is less than perfect; that's the price he must pay for the privilege of swindling me. By the way, my chief guard steals, too; I think he has a fifty-fifty split with Cunningham. I've never tried to find out the arrangement; it would embarrass them.

SALOMON smiled. "Joan Eunice, for a young—and beautiful woman, you sound remarkably like a cynical old man I used to know."

"Do I, Jake dear? I must learn not to sound that way. I must now leave the 'cynical old man' things to you and try to behave like a lady. If I can. But please don't disrupt a smooth household by trying to reform it—or it will wind up like a reform administration: less efficient and still more expensive. Didn't your servants steal from you?"

The lawyer looked sheepish. "Well. . .yes. But I had the best cook in Safe Harbor enclave. If I had fired her, I might have wound up with one just as expensive—who put sugar in gravy. I think I was groused that they were stealing from you—when you were helpless. But I didn't want to hamper with your household while there was any chance that you might recover. Wanted to hand it back as it was. And I have. Or shall."

"Thank you, Jake. At the moment, while I may not yet be a lady, I feel not at all like a cynical old man. I find that I feel like a woman who has been ill and is not yet fully recovered. I had best go to bed. Will you help me?"

"Uh, I'll call the nurse."

"Jake, Jake—this is the body I have; we must quit being jumpy about it. Here, lend me your arm. I can stand if you'll help me. . .and walk to the bed it you'll let me lean on you."

Salomon gave up, offered her both hands to help her out of the chair, steadied her with his arm to the bed. Joan Eunice got into it quickly, slid her negligee off as she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slid under the sheet. "Thank you, Jake."

"My pleasure– Joan Eunice."

"Will you have breakfast with me? Or lunch if you want to sleep late?"

"Uh...lunch."

"I'm looking forward to it." She put out her hand. He took it, bowed over it, hesitated only slightly and kissed it firmly.

Joan Eunice kept his hand and pulled. "Come closer, Jake dear." She reached up, took his face between her palms. "You loved her."

"Yes."

"I loved her."

"I know."

"Say my name. My new name."

"Joan– Joan Eunice."

"Thank you, Jake." Unhurriedly, she pulled his face down, kissed him softly on the lips. "Good night, dear friend."

"Good night, Joan Eunice." He left quickly.

(Joan you bitch, you're pushing him too hard.) (I am *not*!) (The hell you aren't. For a second I thought you were going to drag him right into bed.) (Ridiculous!) (And you're pushing yourself too hard, too.) (Eunice, quit crabbing. I could have backed out up to the last split second. I found that I did not mind it. After all, there are *many* cultures in which men kiss men, as a gesture of friendship.)

(In case you haven't noticed, you are no longer a man – you're a mixed-up chick.) (I've noticed. Look, snoopy, it was a necessary symbol. I had to show Jake that he could touch me, even kiss me good-night...and not have it be tragic. And it wasn't. Reminded me of my father kissing me goodnight...which he did until I was a big boy.)

(Well...perhaps Jake is going to settle for being fatherly. But don't count on it, Joan. Let me warn you, Sis – Jake can kiss *much* better than that. He can kiss so well that your insides melt down, starting at your belly button and spreading in all directions.) (A possibility. A remote one. Now will you shut up and let us sleep? I really *am* tired.) (Love me, Boss?) (I've never stopped loving you dear – and never will.) (Me, too – and wish I could kiss you goodnight. Sleep, Boss – everything's going to be all right.)

Before she could get to sleep, Winifred came in, in robe and slippers. "Miss Joan?" she said softly.

"Yes, dear? Put the floor lights on."

"Mr. Salomon said that you had gone to bed– "

"And you look as if you had. Did he wake you?"

"Oh, no. I was chatting with Mrs. Sloan; she's on watch. But Dr. Garcia left word that your bed was to be all the way down– and I see that it isn't. How do I put it down?"

"I do it myself, right from the bed – down, like that– or back up, like that. I wasn't asleep yet. It's all right, I'll put it all the way down before you leave...and you can tell Doctor that I was a good girl."

"Fine! You can have this capsule if you want it. You don't have to take it, Mrs. Sloan says that Doctor says."

"I'll take it; I want to go right

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to sleep. If you'll hand me the water there...and kiss me goodnight. If you won't, I'll sulk and ring for Mrs. Sloan and ask *her* to kiss me goodnight."

The little nurse grinned. "I'll force myself."

Winifred left about sixty seconds later. (Well, Eunice? How did that one stack up?) (Quite well, butch. Say eighty percent as well as Jake can do.) (You're teasing.) (You'll find out. Winnie is sweet—but Jake has had years more practice. I'm not chucking asparagus at Winnie. I thought you were going to drag her right in with us.) (With Mrs. Sloan outside and watching our heart rate? What do you think I am? A fool?) (Yes.) (Oh, go to sleep!)

XII

PEACE Negotiations, both in Paris and in Montevideo, continued as before. Fighting continued on a token basis and the dead did not complain. Harvard's new president was dismissed by the student government, which then adjourned without appointing a successor. The Secretary of HEW announced a plan to increase the water content of San Francisco Bay to 37%; the Rivers & Harbors Commission denied that HEW had jurisdiction. In Alma Ata a Morale Corps sergeant gave birth to a healthy two-headed boy by Caesarean section; it was watched world-wide and on Luna, via satellite, to a specially arranged chorus of the Thoughts of Chairman Lu. In Washington the IRS, acting under Budget Executive Order (Emergency) of '87, announced an additional temporary surtax of 7%. In Miami Miss Universe (Miss Ghana—42-22-38), only speaking through her press secretary & interpreter, revealed that she intended to be the first starship commander and had been studying neo-Einsteinian ballistics under hypnosis for two years. The General Secretary of the People's Fraternal Society of Cosmonauts, Astronauts, & Space Engineers (AFL-CIO) wondered publicly as to Miss Universe's ability to do simple arithmetic with her shoes on. Madam President of the Federated Women's Clubs of the World stated that the Honorable Secretary was a counterrevolutionary rat-fink and a typical example of male arrogance. In Los Angeles smog deaths were down 3% under emergency pollution-abatement measures and a brisk west wind.

In a big, ugly, ornate, old house Miss Joan Eunice Smith sat in lotus on a mat in her dressing room near a large mirror and facing her nurse-companion-maid, also in lotus. "Comfortable, Winnie dear?"

"Very."

"I think you're even more limber than I am. All right, let's get into the mood for exercise. You start it."

"All right. But Miss Joan? What does it *mean*? Oh, I like it; it's very relaxing. But *what* jewel in *what* lotus, and *why*?"

"It means nothing. And everything. If you must have words, it means peace and love and understanding and anything that you think of as good. But it's not for thinking, dear; it's for *being*. Let

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yourself be open to it, don't think. Don't even try not to think. *Be*."

"All right."

"Start us. Remember the breathing. I'll get in step."

"Om Mani Padme Hum."

(Om Mani Padme Hum. See that aura round her, Boss? She must have had *quite* a night.) (Shut up, Eunice; these prayers were *your* idea.) "Om Mani Padme Hum."

"Om Mani Padme Hum." (Om Mani Padme Hum) "Om Mani Padme Hum." "Om Mani..."

(That's enough, Joan.) (So short, beloved? Clock says only twenty minutes.) (I use a different clock. We're warm all through, we're ready. Winnie is more than ready; you'll have to call her back.)

"Om Mani Padme Hum. Winifred. Winnie darling, hear me. The sun is rising and so must we."

The little redhead was still perfectly in lotus, soles of her feet turned upwards on her thighs, hands in her lap, palms upward. She was still intoning, with her breathing paced exactly with her prayers. But her eyes had turned up; only the whites showed. "Come back, Winnie. Time."

The girl's eyes turned down to normal, she looked puzzled, then smiled. "Already? Seems like only a moment. I must have fallen asleep."

"Happens. Are you ready? Warm and loose and your muscles soft as cotton?"

"Uh . . . yes, I am."

"Then let's try some singles." Joan Eunice flowed upward from the mat like a flower unfolding and was standing. "You criticize me and I'll criticize you. Then we can have companion exercises for dessert." Joan looked at herself in the long glass. "I think my belly is firmer every day. I keep telling myself."

"It's perfect and you know it." The redhead got up more slowly, caught herself in a yawn.

"Still sleepy, dear? No pleasant dreams last night?"

The girl barely blushed, then shrugged and smiled. "Pleasant all right but not enough hours. I hope we didn't disturb you."

"Didn't hear a sound. Wouldn't have guessed if you hadn't told me when you came in to kiss me goodnight. Dear, if you're short on sleep, maybe you'd rather just criticize."

"Oh, no, I'm getting more out of our exercises than you are—don't want to miss a day. But—yes, I'm short on sleep. Paul—Oh, dear! But I didn't say his last name."

"Didn't hear you, I was rubbing my ears."

"Fibber. He didn't leave until half past two. So I did lose sleep. Not that I minded!"

"I'm sure you didn't. Winnie dear, I did *not* mean to snoop. Oh, normal curiosity—being a virgin myself."

The nurse looked startled, said, "But—" and shut up.

Joan Eunice smiled. "Sho', sho', hon, I know what that 'But' means. Mrs. Branca was married...and Johann Smith was married four times not to mention jumping out of windows. But Joan Eunice is a virgin—dig me, doll baby?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, looked at that way—"

"Only way I *can* look at it. So I'm curious as a Girl Scout. But *telling me would still leave me* knowing nothing, even if you wanted to tell, which I'm sure you don't. Some day—no hurry—I suppose I'll find out for myself. So don't you dare blush again and let's get on with our exercises. I'll run through the Tortoise variations and you push me if I need it."

AFTER an hour of twisting and stretching and posing Joan Eunice said, "Enough. Much more and we'd be sweating instead of glowing. Ready for gruesome twosomes?"

The high note of the outer door sounded in the bath-dressingroom. "Damn," said Joan. "I don't mean a ladylike 'darn.' Damn. Into your tights, dear, and I'll drop your smock over your head. Tell 'em 'No ice today.'"

"Right away." Dressed in seconds, the girl left.

(How'd we look today, Eunice? Tits beginning to suit you?) (We're

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more than halfway there, Joan; in another week you can cut the time down.) (Not anxious to; it's the most fun of the day...except when our lord and guardian deigns to dine with us. Tell me, hon—have you been fretting about those negative reports?) (No, *you* have been fretting; they were what I expected. Nobody knows how memory works except that everyone is sure he knows and thinks all the others are fools.) (I've been thinking about those flatworms. If you can chop up a trained flatworm and feed it to another flatworm and then the second one seems to remember what the first one learned, then—) (Boss! I keep telling you, I am *not* a flatworm! I told you a long time ago that the body remembers and—let's table it; here comes the fuzz.)

"Miss Joan, it's Dr. Garcia and Mr. Salomon."

"Oh. Well, I'm not going to dress; we've still to finish. Grab me a negligee—not that plate-glass job. The London Fog is suitable, don't you think?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I guess. Makes you look only half naked instead of bare."

"Who taught me to dress that way, winsome Winnie?" (I did.) (Sure, Eunice—but she thinks she bosses me. I'm her good baby who always does what Mama says... until we get dear Doctor out of our hair.) "Please tell the gentlemen that I will be right out."

Miss Smith stopped to apply lipstick, decided that her face could get along with no other renewals, took a brush-comb and teased her too-short locks into fluffiness, stepped into stilt-high mules, put on the negligee and looked at herself in the long glass.

She decided that the selective opacity of the robe was just right —except that the upper part was a little *too* modest. So she delayed long enough to apply lipstick to areolae.

Now satisfied with her appearance—(Boss, we look like a high-priced pooka.) (Very high-priced, I hope. Were you criticizing?) (Not at all, I was applauding.)—she went out into her boudoir. "Good morning, Doctor. Hi, Jake dear. Won't you sit down? Coffee? Or we can find some Old Kentucky Rat Poison, bottled in the barn."

"Coffee," agreed Salomon. "You look charming, my dear."

"Snake charming. I've been exercising and smell like a horse."

"Not more than a small pony. I'll turn up the ventilation. Joan Eunice, Dr. Garcia wants to check you over."

"Really? What's wrong? I feel fine. Aside from these cold prison bars all around me and my head on a pillow stone."

"Dr. Garcia thinks we can do something about those cold prison bars. Joan Eunice, we agreed that it was not smart to go into court until you were discharged as well in all respects. He thinks it may be possible, now."

"Oh. *Oh*! How about that platoon of psychiatrists?"

"We'll have them. We may never need them. But we'll be ready to offset their expert witnesses. You will have to put up with long and searching interviews; our own experts must go into court prepared." (Prepared to justify their fancy fees. Don't worry, Boss; I'll hide under a rock whenever a shrink is around.)

"That's okay. I'm delighted that Dr. Garcia thinks I'm well. Shall we step into my dressing room, Doctor? Come along, Winnie. Jake, the *Wall Street Journal* is over there."

Once she was alone with her doctor and nurse Miss Smith said, "Well, Doctor? Shall I stretch out on the massage table?"

"No, this examination is pro forma, to allow me to log that I gave you a physical on the day I discharged you. I'll listen with a stethoscope and make you say 'Ah —'things like that. If you'll sit down at your dressing table and drop the top of your robe, please."

"Yes, sir."

SHE kept quiet while he passed the stethoscope here and there, coughed when she was told to, inhaled sharply and sighed noisily as directed. Once she said, "Wups! Sorry, I'm ticklish," and asked, "What does that tell you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Just palpating for lumps. Again, pro forma—although it's been some time since this was done." (Enjoying it, kiddo?) (Maybe you are, Eunice; I'm not. I'd rather be approached more romantic-like.) (Don't kid your grandmother; you enjoy it.)

The doctor stepped back and looked at her thoughtfully. Joan Eunice said, "Anything more, sir? G-Y-N?"

"Not unless you ask for it. Trouble?"

"Not a bit. I feel healthy enough to whup a grizzly bear."

"And you check out that healthy, too. Nevertheless your case worries me."

"Why, Doctor?"

"Because your case is unique. I know almost as little about it as you do. Joan, when you left this house—as Mr. Smith—I never expected to see you alive again. When you were brought back, I did not expect you to regain consciousness. When you regained consciousness, I felt sorry for you ...as I never expected you to be other than paralyzed from the neck down. Yet here you are, well and healthy. Apparently."

"Why only 'apparently,' Doctor?"

"I don't know. We know little enough about any transplant—and nothing about a brain transplant other than what we have learned from you. Joan, for the past two weeks there has been no reason—other than caution—why you needed more supervision than any other young woman in good health. Say Winifred here, for example."

He shrugged. "Of the two you seem to be somewhat more ruggedly healthy than she is. Nevertheless I would bet that Winifred, barring accidents, will live out her normal span...whereas you don't fit any curve; you're unique. Please, I'm not trying to frighten you, but only a fool makes predictions based on ignorance; I am not that sort of fool."

"Doctor," she answered calmly, "you're saying that this body could reject the brain—or vice versa, it's the same thing. Or that I could drop dead, heart failure, for no defined reason. I know it; I read a great deal on transplants, while I was still Johann Smith. I am not afraid. If it happens—well, I've had a wonderful vacation from old age, with its pain and boredom." She smiled happily. "It's been like dying and going to heaven—and even a few weeks of heaven can be eternity."

"I'm glad you accept it so philosophically."

"Not 'philosophically,' Doctor. With wonder and joy and reaching out greedily for every golden second!"

"Well...I'm pleased that Winifred is going to stay with you and I hope that you will keep her a long time—"

"As long as she will stay! Always, I hope."

"—because, otherwise, I would worry. But Winnie can do in an emergency anything I could do and she'll have everything here with which to do it—and she knows and I want you to know that I will get here fast if she sends for me. All right, my dear, let's get that trans-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mitter off you; you won't be monitored any longer. Nurse. Rubbing alcohol, and cotton."

"Yes, Doctor." Winifred went past the massage table, reached into a cupboard.

Dr. Garcia detached the tiny transmitter. "Slight erythema, and a faint circle of mechanical dermatitis. With your amazing repair factor I'm betting you won't be able to find where it's been by tomorrow. But I'm going to miss my morning movie."

"Sir?"

"I don't suppose anyone has told you but I have watched the monitors every morning, while you exercised...waiting for your heart to pound. Or your respiration to warn me. Nothing. Never anything abnormal, I mean; I could tell that you were exercising. Very mild exercise, I concluded.

"Why, I suppose so. Yoga."

"Well! I would not class yoga as mild. If we mean the same thing."

"I meant that yoga isn't a hundred-yard dash, or weight lifting. But I—well, both of us—have been doing the classic poses. Except the headstands; I'm not foolish, I know I have a Sears-Roebuck skull."

"I wouldn't have let her, Doctor! But she never tried one; truly she didn't."

"Doctor, I haven't been building muscles for show; I am simply trying to get perfect control over my new—wonderful—body. Here, let me show you."

JOAN stood up, letting the negligee fall, stood on the floor six inches from the exercise mat—shifted her weight onto her left foot, brought her right leg up behind her in perfect extension while she leaned slowly forward...deep ...deeper...until she clasped her left ankle with both hands and pressed her cheek against her shin, with her right leg arrow straight above her in a perfect split.

She held it for three controlled breaths, then dropped her hands flat to the floor, slowly lifted her left leg, balancing it against the right, until she was holding a hand stand, legs together, back arched, toes pointed.

Again slowly she let her limbs sink like drooping petals until they touched the mat—let the Arch sink into the Wheel, melted still farther into the Diamond pose, knees and elbows touching mat and floor—held it—let it roll slowly forward into Lotus. "Om Mani Padme Hum." (Om Mani Padme Hum. Pick up your check at the gate, girl; we won't need to shoot this scene over.) (Thanks, Eunice. But I had a good guru, Guru.) (De nada, Chela.)

Dr. Garcia was applauding. "Terrific! Unbelievable. Like everything else about this case. Winnie! Can you do that?"

Joan flowed upward, was standing. "Sure she can! Skin 'em off, dear, and show Doctor."

The nurse blushed deeply. "No, I can't Don't believe her, Doctor; I'm just learning."

"Oh, fuff. I have to steady her only a little. Come back in two weeks, Doctor, and she'll do it by herself. It's not hard—just takes angleworms in your ancestry."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Which you seem to have. But, if Winnie didn't teach you, where did *you* learn it, Joan?"

(Oh, oh! Watch it, Boss -- he smells a mouse.)

"How old are you, Doctor?"

"Eh? Thirty-seven."

"I learned it about forty years before you were born. But didn't have time to keep it up," she went on. "Then for many years didn't have the physique even to try. But it all came back so easily that I am forced to assume that Mrs. Branca was better at it than I was even as a limber kid." (Let's see him check *that* sweetheart.) (Never make a lie too complicated, Boss.) (Look, infant, I was lying with a straight face when your grandmother was in rompers. Erase and correct -- your great grandmother.)

"Well...I'm going to write it up as part of your final physical -- if I can figure out how to describe it. Your robe, Joan?"

"Thank you." She took it and held it, instead of presenting her back for him to put it on her. "Doctor, Mr. Salomon will be settling your fees and expenses. But, to show my great appreciation, I want to add something."

He shook his head. "A doctor should not accept more than his fee . . . and mine are high."

"Nevertheless I want to." She dropped the robe. "Winnie, turn your back, dear." She went straight into his startled arms, put up her face to be kissed.

He hesitated about one heartbeat, then put his arms around her and kissed her. Joan sighed softly, her lips came open, and she flowed more closely against him.

(Don't faint! Let's not miss *any* of this.) (Don't bother me, Eunice: I'm *busy*!)

The Doctor broke from it, caught his breath and looked at her soberly. Then he reached down, recovered her robe and held it. Joan let him put it on her, then said, "Thank you, Doctor." She turned and smiled.

"Um. I think I can honestly report that you are in excellent physical condition. Mr. Salomon is waiting."

"Please tell him I'll be out in a moment."

Joan waited until the door closed. Then she went into Winifred's arms and giggled against her shoulder. "Winnie, did you turn your back? Didn't you peek a little? I hope."

"I turned my back. But I had a full view in the mirror. *Whew*!"

"Whew twice. So *that's* what it feels like. Honey, I don't feel nearly so virginal now."

"Is he good? It looked like it."

"I don't know. I have no way to judge. Dear darling Jake kisses me; you've seen him -- but just uncle sort of pecks. And you kiss me -- and *yours* aren't pecks. But you're a girl and smaller than I am. Doctor is the first man who has really kissed me...and it made me feel so little and helpless that I darn near dragged him down onto the mat. You've never kissed him?"

"*Him*? Joan honey, if I told any of the nurses about this, I would not be believed. Dr. Garcia doesn't even pat bottoms; he just growls."

"He patted my bottom. I think he did. Things were fuzzy right then."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I *know* he did. I saw it and didn't believe it. Joan? You wouldn't have made me skin down. Would you?"

"Why not? I was."

"Yes, but you're a patient. I'm a nurse, I'm supposed to be a robot and a chaperon."

"Only we know you're not."

"Well...anyhow I can't do that one; it's much too hard."

"I told him to come back in two weeks and you'd be able to. Shall I remind him?"

"Oh, Joan! You're teasing me again." The redhead added thoughtfully, "Do you really think I could, by myself, in only two more weeks?"

"I know you can. But not in clothes, not even tights. So if you are going to blush and go chicken, I had better not remind dear Doctor."

"Uh...that did look like quite a kiss. But Paul wouldn't like it."

"Wouldn't like what? Your demonstrating precision body control to a doctor? Or kissing a doctor? Or what the kiss might lead to? And how is Paul to know if you don't tell him?" (Boss, you are corrupting the youth of the land.) (Egg feathers, Eunice. Either Paul won't marry her...or he's married and can't. Either way he's got no business monopolizing her. As you pointed out, sex is not a sport, it's for being happy.)

"Uh...Doctor wouldn't kiss me, anyway. He doesn't even know I'm female."

"Never believe it. You are and he's not stupid. He'll kiss you if I suggest that it's the applause expected for a perfect performance. You've got two weeks to make up your mind, and right now I've got to go see dear Jake."

XIII

"THOSE having business before this Honorable Court draw nigh!"

"May it please the Court, while Petitioners are ready to proceed, may they respectfully invite to the Court's attention that no proper foundation has been laid. This matter relates to the competency of Johann Sebastian Bach Smith, grandfather of the four petitioners ...and Counsel is not aware that he is in court."

"*Order*! There will be order in the court—*at once*. Or the room will be cleared. Counsel, are you suggesting that Miss Smith—this young lady at whom I am pointing—is *not* Johann Sebastian Bach Smith?"

"Counsel suggests nothing, Your Honor. I merely note that we have nothing in the record to show that the person at whom the Court pointed *is* Johann Sebastian Bach Smith—and that the question of competency cannot be considered until proof of identity is indubitably established."

"Is Counsel attempting to instruct this Court in the Law?"

"Oh, not at all!"

"It sounded like it. May I remind Counsel that this Court sits today in equity, not in law—and that the procedures are what the Court says they are."

"Most certainly, your honor. I regret if I inadvertently sounded otherwise."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You were one-sixteenth of an inch from contempt, and don't let it happen again."

"Yes, Your Honor."

"...as I am sick and tired of the behavior of about fifty percent of the spectators and at least ninety percent of the press, I order the bailiff to clear the room. Use a platoon, Evelyn, and clear these cattle out of the chutes promptly—and if that fancy video equipment is damaged in the process, we won't worry about it.

"Counsels, Petitioners, Guardian and Ward—putative ward, let the record show—will adjourn to my chambers while we get this silly hassle cleared up."

"Jake, this is fun! If I'm not *me*, then I'm flat broke and footloose. You'll have to marry me—to keep me off Welfare."

"Johann, shut up that drivel. This is serious."

"Jake, I refuse to see doom. If I'm not me, then I'm dead and it would be worth being broke to hear my will read and see the faces of my loving descendants when they discover that they wind up with trivial incomes that aren't even tax-free. Jake, every rich man wants to hear his will read—and I may get the chance."

"Hmm. Under the theory they seem to be following, Eunice is entitled to hear your will read—remember that paragraph about 'all persons not specifically named who are in my personal and private employ at the time of my demise—'"

"Can't say that I do, but if you put it in, it's there."

"It's there. If you're not Johann, then you have to be Eunice. It's an 'either-or.'" (Nope! It's *both*.) (Eunice, this is going to be fun!) (I think so, too, Boss.)

The part of his chambers selected by Judge McCampbell was a comfortable lounge. Once in it he looked around.

"Mmm...Jake, Ned, Miss Smith, Alec, Mrs. Seward, Mrs. Frabish. You're Mrs. Crampton, aren't you? Mrs. Lopez. Parkinson, how the devil did you get in here?"

"Amicus curiae, Your Honor."

"You're no friend of this court and you don't belong here."

"But—"

"Will you walk or would you rather be thrown out?"

Parkinson elected to walk. When the door sealed behind him, the judge said, "Sperling, set that thing so I can record when I feel like it, then you can leave. Alec, you look as if you were all set to object."

"Me? Oh, not at all, Judge."

"Good. Because we're going to cut through the fog on this silly business. Who needs a fog cutter?" The judge stepped to a corner bar. "Alec? Gin and tonic as usual?"

"Thanks, Judge."

"I'm forgetting the ladies. Mrs. Seward? Something with alcohol? Or coffee? This machine will make tea, too, if I can remember which buttons to push. And how about your sister? And your cousins? Miss Smith? I recall what you used to order at the Gib some years back. Are your tastes the same now?"

(Watch it, Boss! It's loaded.) (Relax, Eunice.) "Judge, with a new body my tastes have changed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in many respects. But I remember fondly Glen Grant on the rocks—back before my doctors put a stop to it. But I haven't tasted anything with that much authority since those days and, since this is a competency hearing, I'll settle for coffee. Or a Coke, if you can twist its tail for that."

The judge rubbed his nose and looked thoughtful. "I'm not sure it's a competency hearing until we settle this matter of identity. Jake could have told you about Glen Grant. The idea of Johann Smith ordering a Coke shakes me."

Joan smiled at him. "I know—hardly seems in character. My doctors made me quit carbonated drinks long before they made me give up whisky. Back about the time you entered law school. If I'm Johann Smith, that is. If I'm not, I'll ask to be excused—as in that case I'm not a ward of the Court and shouldn't be here. Isn't that correct?"

McCampbell looked still more thoughtful. "Jake, do you want to caution your client? No, not your 'client,' your—no, not that either. Blessed if I know what you are; that's what we've got to find out. Young lady, sit down and I'll fetch you a Coke. Alec, get drink orders from your four ladies and serve them. Jake, you and Ned serve yourselves—Alec and I have a date with some fish in Nova Scotia tomorrow morning and I'll be switched if I'll keep fish waiting over a surprise turn in this hearing. Alec, confound your Irish soul, are you seriously questioning the identity of this young lady?"

"Well—Judge, are you going to talk about contempt if I suggest that your question is not properly put?"

McCampbell sighed. "Young lady, pay no attention to him. He was my roommate in college and gives me a bad time whenever he comes into my court. Some day I going to give him thirty days to think it over—and about four-thirty tomorrow morning I'm going to trip him into some very cold water. Accidentally."

"Do that, Mac, and I'll sue. In Canada."

"I know he was your roommate, Judge; you were both Big Greens—Dartmouth 'seventy-eight, was it not? Why not let him ask me questions and find out for himself who I am?"

MRS. SEWARD said shrilly, "That's not the way to go about it! First you must take the fingerprints of that—that *impostor*—and—"

"*Mrs. Seward*!"

"Yes, Judge? I was just going to say—"

"*Shut up*!"

Mrs. Seward shut up. Judge McCampbell went on, "Madam, simply because it suits me to be informal in my chambers do not think that this is not a court in session or that I would not find you in contempt. I would enjoy it. Alec, you had better convince her."

"Yes, your honor. Mrs. Seward, any suggestions you have, you will make through *me*, not to the Court."

"But I was just going to say that—"

"Mrs. Seward, keep quiet!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You're here only by courtesy of the Court until this matter of identity is cleared up. I'm sorry, Judge. I advised my clients that, at the most, this was a holding action. I know that Jake Salomon would not risk bringing a ringer—sorry, Miss Smith—a ringer into court."

"And I know it."

"But they insisted. If Mrs. Seward won't control herself, I'll have to ask your permission to withdraw from the case."

The judge shook his head and grinned. "No, sirree, Alec. You fetched them here, you're stuck with them—at least until court adjourns. Jake? Is Ned still fronting for you? Or will you speak for yourself?"

"Oh, I think we can both speak up from time to time, without friction."

"Ned?"

"Of course, Judge. Jake can speak for himself and should. But I'm finding it interesting. Novel situation."

"Quite. Well, speak up if you have anything to contribute. Alec, I don't think we can get anywhere today. Do you?"

Alec Train stood mute. Joan said, "Why not, Judge? I'm here, I'm ready. Ask me anything. Bring out the rack and the thumb screws—I'll talk."

The judge again rubbed his nose. "Miss Smith, I sometimes think that my predecessors were overly hasty in letting such tools be abolished. I think I can settle to my own satisfaction whether or not you are the person known as Johann Sebastian Bach Smith, of this city and of Smith Enterprises, Limited. But it is not that simple. In an ordinary identity case Mrs. Seward's suggestion of fingerprints would be practical. But not in this case. Alec? Do petitioners stipulate that the brain of their grandfather was transplanted into another body?"

Petitioners' counsel looked unhappy. "May it please the court, I am under instructions not to stipulate anything of the sort."

"So? What's your theory?"

"Uh, 'Missing and presumed dead,' I suppose. We take the position that the burden of proof is on anyone who steps forward and claims to be Johann Sebastian Bach Smith."

"Jake?"

"I can't agree as to the burden of proof, Judge. But my client—my ward who is also my client, Johann Sebastian Bach Smith—is present in court and I am pointing at her. I know her to be that named individual. Both of us are ready to be questioned by the Court in any fashion in order to assure the Court as to her identity. I was about to say that both of us are willing to be questioned by anyone—but on second thought I cannot concede that there is *any* interested party other than my client."

"Judge—"

"Yes, Miss Smith? Jake, do you want her to speak?"

"Oh, certainly. Anything."

"Go ahead, Miss Smith."

"Thank you. Judge, my granddaughters can ask me anything. I've known them since they were babies; if they try to trip me, I'll have them hanging on the ropes in two minutes. For example, Johan-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

na—the one you called Mrs. Seward—was hard to housebreak. On her eight birthday—May fifteenth, nineteen-sisty, the day the Paris Conference between Eisenhower and Khrushchev broke down—her mother, my daughter Evelyn, invited me over to see the little brat have her birthday cake, and Evelyn shoved Johanna into my lap and she cut loose—"

"I did no such thing!"

"Oh, yes, you did, Johanna. Evelyn snatched you off my lap and apologized and said that you had a bed-wetting problem. Can't say as to that—my daughter lied easily."

"Judge, are you going to sit there and let that—that *person*—insult the memory of my dead mother?"

"Mrs. Seward, your counsel cautioned you. If you don't heed this caution, this Court is capable of nailing you into a barrel and letting you speak only when I say to pull out the bung. Or some such. Squelch her, Alec. Suppress her the way they did in the trial in *Alice in Wonderland*—which this is beginning to resemble. She's not a party to this; she is here only to give evidence in case the Court needs it. Miss Smith—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Your opinions as to the veracity of your putative descendants are not evidential. Can you think of anything that Johann Smith would know and that I would know or could check on—but which Jake Salomon could not possibly have briefed you on?"

"That's a tough one. Your Honor."

"So it is. But the alternative—today—is for me to assume that you are an impostor most carefully coached and then to question you endlessly in an attempt to trip you. I don't want to do that...because final identification—now that the matter has been raised—will have to be by evidence as conclusive as fingerprints. You see that, don't you?"

"Yes, I see it but I don't quite see how." She smiled and spread her graceful hands. "My fingerprints—and everything about me that can be seen—are those of my donor."

"Yes, yes, surely—but there are more ways of killing a cat than buttering it with parsnips. Later."

"Harrumph!"

"Yes, Jake?"

"Judge, in the interests of my client I cannot concede that physical means of identifying this body are relevant. The question is: Is this the *individual* designated by Social Security number 551-20-0052 and known to the world as Johann Sebastian Bach Smith? I suggest that 'Estate of Parsons vs Rhode Island,' while not on all fours, is relevant."

MCCAMPBELL said mildly, "Jake, you are much older than I am and I'm reasonably sure you know the law more thoroughly than I do. Nevertheless, here today, I am the judge."

"Certainly, Your Honor! May it please the Court, I—"

"So quit being so damned respectful in my chambers. You sat on my orals and voted to pass me, so you must think I know some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

law. Of course the Parsons case is relevant; we'll get to it later. In the meantime I'm trying to find a basis for a pro-tem ruling. Well, Miss Smith?"

"Judge, I don't care whether I'm identified or not. In the words of a gallant gentleman: 'Broke don't scare me.'" She suddenly chuckled and glanced at her granddaughters. "May I tell you something funny—privately?"

"Mmm...I could clear the room of everyone but you and your counsel; nevertheless you had better save any jokes until after we adjourn."

"Yes, sir. May I address one irrelevant remark to my granddaughters?"

"Hmmph. I may strike it from the record. Go ahead."

"Thank you, Judge. Girls—Johanna, Marla, June, Elinor—look at me. For thirty-odd years you have been waiting for me to die. Now you hope to prove that I am dead, else this silly business would never have come up. Girls, I hope you get away with it...for I can't wait to see your faces when my will is read." (You zapped 'em, Boss! *Look* at those expressions!) (I surely did, darling. Now shut up; we're not home free.)

"Your honor—"

"Yes, Alec?"

"May I suggest that this is not relevant?"

Joan cut in. "But I *said* it would be irrelevant, Mr. Train. Just the same, they had better start thinking about how to break my will, instead of this nonsense." She added thoughtfully, "Perhaps I had better set up a lifetime trust that will make them slightly better off with me alive than dead...to protect myself against patricidal assassination. Judge, is 'patricidal' the right word? Now that I'm female?"

"Blessed if I know. Better make it 'avicidal'—no, avicide already means the killing of birds and has nothing to do with avus. Never mind, Miss Smith, take up such matters with your attorney and let us return to our muttons. Have you thought of anything which Jake Salomon could not have coached you on?"

"It's difficult. Jake has been handling my affairs for most of a generation. Mmm, Judge, will you shake hands with me?"

"Eh?"

"We had best do it under the table, or out of sight of anyone but Mr. Train."

Looking puzzled the Judge went along with her request. Then he said, "Be damned! Excuse me. Miss Smith—shake hands with Alex."

Joan did so, letting her body cover it from spectators. Mr. Train looked surprised, whispered something to her which she answered in a whisper. (Boss, what was that?) (Greek. Tell you later, dear—though girls aren't supposed to know.)

McCampbell said, "Mr. Salomon could not have coached you?"

"Ask him. Jake was a Barb, not a Greek."

"Of course I was a Barb," Salomon growled. "I had no stomach for being the exhibit Jew in a chapter that did not want its charter lifted. What is this?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Train said, "Well, it seems that Miss Smith is a fraternity brother of the Judge and myself. Mmm. . . sister, I suppose. Judge, it's easy to check this on both Johanm Smith and Mr. Salomon. In the meantime I find it persuasive."

"Perhaps I can add to it," Joan said. "Mr. Train—Brother Alec—of course you should check on both Jake and myself. But look me up in our fraternal archives under 'Schmidt' rather that 'Smith' as I changed my name in 'forty-one. Which my granddaughters know. But you both know of our fraternal Distress Fund?"

"Yes."

"Certainly, Miss Smith."

"The fund did not exist when I was pledged—my senior year it was, after I made Phi Beta Kappa and because our local chapter needed a greasy grind and had an alumnus willing to pay for my initiation. The fund was started during World War Two; I helped augment it some years later and was one of its trustees from 'fifty-six until late in the 'eighties when I dropped most outside activities. Judge, you tapped the fund for fifteen hundred in the spring of 'seventy-eight."

"Eh? So I did. But I paid it back, eventually—then donated the same amount at a later time, according to our customs."

"I'm glad to hear it. The latter, I mean; you were off the hook before I resigned as a trustee. I was a hard-nosed trustee, Judge, and never okayed a loan until I was certain that it was a distress case and not just a convenience to a lazy undergraduate. Shall I relate the circumstances which caused me to okay your loan?"

THE judge blinked. "I would rather you did not, at least not now. Alec knows them."

"Yes," agreed Train. "I would have lent him the money myself if I had had it." (What is this, Boss?) (Case of 'rheumatic fever,' sweet.) (Abortion money?) (No, no—he married the girl—and here I am digging up the skeleton.) (Bitch.) (No, Eunice—my granddaughters don't know what I'm talking about, nor does Jake.)

"I see no reason to discuss it," Miss Smith went on, "unless the judge wants to question me privately—and if you do, Judge, do remind me to tell you a real giggle about the ancestries of my so loving granddaughters. Odd things happen even in the best families—and the Schmidt family was never one of the best. We're a vulgar lot, me and my descendants—our only claim to prominence is too much money."

"Later perhaps, Miss Smith. I am now ready to hand down a decision—temporary and conservative. Counsels?"

"Ready, Judge."

"Nothing to add, your Honor."

McCampbell fitted his fingertips together. "Identity. It need not depend on fingerprints or retinal patterns or similar customary evidence. John Doe could lose both hands and both feet, have both eyes gouged out, be so scarred and damaged that even his dentist could not identify him—and he would still be John Doe, with the same Social Security number. Some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing like that happened to you, Miss Smith, assuming that you are indeed Johann Sebastian Bach Smith—though I am happy to see—" he smiled—"that no scars show.

"This Court finds persuasive the evidence of your identity brought out in this hearing. We assume, pro tem, that you are Johann Sebastian Bach Smith.

"However—" the judge looked at Salomon—"we now get to the Parsons case. Inasmuch as the Supreme Court has ruled that the question of life or death resides in the brain and nowhere else, this Court now rules that identity must therefore reside in the brain and nowhere else. In the past it has never been necessary to decide this point; now it is necessary. We find that to rule in any other fashion would be inconsistent with the intent of the Supreme Court in 'Estate of Henry M. Parsons vs Rhode Island.' To rule in any other way would create chaos in future cases in any way similar to this one: Identity must lie in the brain.

"Now, Jake, I am in effect going to shove the burden of the proof over onto you and your client. At a later time you must be prepared to prove beyond any possible doubt that Johann Sebastian Bach Smith's brain was removed from his body and transplanted into this body—" McCampbell pointed.

Jake nodded. "I realize that, Judge. A person who wants to cash a check must prove his identity—this is on all fours. But today we were taken by surprise."

"So was the Court—and, Alec, I'm going to take you by surprise someday...with something better than a pie bed or an exploding cigar. Damn it, you should have warned Court and Counsel."

"I apologize, Your Honor. I received my instructions quite late."

"You should have at once asked for a continuance, not let this hearing open. You know better. Never mind, the hearing has been instructive. Miss Smith—Miss Johann Sebastian Bach Smith subject to remarks above—you were made a ward of this Court and placed under the guardianship of Mr. Jacob Salomon for one reason alone: You were at the time not competent to manage your affairs by reason of post-operative incapacity. Let the record show that neither insanity in the legal sense nor mental illness in the medical sense had anything to do with it; you were in an extended condition of unconsciousness following surgery and that was all. You are no longer unconscious, you appear to be in good health, and the Court takes judicial notice that during this hearing you appeared always to be alert and clear-headed. Since the sole condition—unconsciousness—on which you were made ward no longer obtains, you are now no longer a ward and Mr. Salomon is discharged of his guardianship—what's the trouble, Alec?"

"May it please the Court—as counsel for the Petitioners I must ask to have an objection entered into the record."

"On what grounds?"

"Why, lack of expert witnesses

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as to, uh, 'Miss Smith's' competence."

"Do you have expert witnesses ready to examine her?"

"Of course."

"Jake?"

"Certainly. Waiting on call."

"How many?"

"Harrumph! One more than Alec has, however many he qualifies."

"So I expected and if we start qualifying expert witnesses now and let each one exercise his little ego, those fish in Nova Scotia would die of old age. Keep your shirt on, Alec. No expert witnesses were used to show this person's incompetence; the gross condition of unconsciousness was stipulated—and now no longer exists. Alec, your objection goes into the record but I am putting you on notice that your claim of need for expert witnesses lacks foundation—and this time the burden of proof is on *you*. Petitioners will have to show something more than great anxiety to get their hands on the large sums of money at stake in this matter. Every citizen, every person, is conditionally presumed to be competent—and that means *everyone*—you, me, Jake, Miss Smith, Petitioners, and the illiterate who fills that bar and cleans out the empties. This Court will not set the extremely bad precedent of allowing you, or anyone, to conduct a fishing expedition into the matter of a person's competency without proper foundation. However—Jake."

"Yes, Judge."

"We all know what this hearing is really about. Money. Lots of money. You might explain to Miss Smith that her competence may be challenged at some later time."

"We're prepared for it."

"While I've discharged you as her guardian, you will stay on as conservator of the property of Johann Sebastian Bach Smith pending positive proof of identity—and I do mean *positive*; you've got to trace Smith's brain into this body every step of the way. What was the name of that surgeon? Boyle? I suppose you'll need him. And several others. I'm not going to take anything for granted, nor permit any stipulations; there is too much at stake and I don't intend to be reversed. Alec, if you are going to challenge competency, you will have to wait until after that time and—if it's in my court—show foundation for such challenge. That satisfy you?"

"I guess it will have to."

"I guess so, too. Court's adjourned."

MRS. SEWARD stood up, red-faced, and said to Alec Train, "*You're fired*!"

McCampbell said coldly, "Madam, consider yourself lucky that you saved that outburst until after Court adjourned. Now, get out of my chambers. You other three ladies may leave, too."

Johanna's sister June said as she stood up: "Judge, may I ask a question?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Frabish."

"You've turned this person loose—that's all right, I'm not criticizing. But are you leaving her in our grandfather's house? I think

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you ought to know that it is loaded, simply *loaded*, with valuable works of art. What is to keep her from gutting it while we are proving that she *can't* be our grandfather?"

"Oh. Madam, Mr. Salomon knows the duties and responsibilities of a conservator. However—Jake, it would be prudent not to permit any objects of sentimental or artistic value to leave that house during this waiting period."

"No problem. Since I've had to manage the household I've been staying there much of the time. But I'll have a word with Johann's chief guard."

"Judge, may I say something?"

"Certainly, my— Miss Smith."

"I'd like protection against *them*. June doesn't know what objets d'art I own. Not one of them has been inside my house since it was built. During my long illness and confinement not one of them called on me or sent flowers or anything. And the same for my post-surgery convalescence—except that I learned that Johanna—Mrs. Seward—tried to crash in right after my operation. I don't trust them; I'd like the Court's protection."

"Jake?"

"I wasn't there but I heard it from Johann's chief guard."

"Mrs. Seward?"

She sniffed. "I had a perfect right! Next of kin."

"I think I understand it. All right, you four ladies—listen carefully, then leave. You will refrain from visiting the home or offices or other properties of Johann Sebastian Bach Smith. You will refrain from making any attempt to see or to speak with this young lady I have been addressing as Miss Smith. If you need to communicate with her or with the Court's appointed conservator Mr. Salomon, you will do so only through this Court or through your attorney, whoever he may be, to Mr. Salomon and *never* directly to Miss Smith. This is an order to all four of you and each of you will obey under pain of severe penalties for contempt. Do you understand? Are there any questions?"

McCampbell waited, then went on, "Very well. Now all four of you leave."

The judge remained standing while they filed out. When the door sealed, he sighed. "Whew! Miss Smith—or should I say 'Brother Schmidt?'—will you have that Glen Grant on rocks now? Glenlivet actually, I don't have Glen Grant."

She smiled. "Truly, I haven't tried anything that potent on this new body. Jake and I should leave—you and Brother Alec have a date with a fish."

"Oh, do sit down. Alec has his gear in his car in the basement and my copter is picking us up from the roof in about an hour. Another Coke?"

"Is there sherry? I get a very pleasant buzz on just a glass of sherry—I conclude that my donor did not drink at all." (Almost never, Boss—and you're giving me a taste for the stuff.) (Quiet, darling—later.) (All right. . .but ask him about our *name*. Isn't Judgie Wudgie a darling? Wonder what he's like in bed?) (You and your

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one-track mind! I'll ask him about our name. Now shut up!)

"Sherry it shall be. Jake? Ned? Alec?"

"Judge, since Jake doesn't need me, I'll ask to be excused."

"Okay, Ned. Alec, serve yourself and take care of Jake; I want to stare at Brother Schmidt. I probably won't be seeing you again, Miss Smith. Your granddaughters are almost certain to try to move it into a higher court. That business of proving who you are by our fraternity grip—that tore it. All I could do today was to give you a little protection in the interim."

"Which I appreciated, sir. Here's an odd thing about this sex change. When I was an old man, frail and helpless, I was afraid of nothing. Now I'm young and healthy and strong. But female. To my surprise I find that I want to be protected."

Alec Train said over his shoulder from the bar, "I'll protect you, Brother Schmidt! Don't trust Brother McCampbell—he was the worst wolf in our chapter. Step aside, Brother Wolf—it's my turn to stare at our new brother."

"Boys, I am not a 'new brother,' I was pledged years before you were born. But I'm not surprised that you like to stare at me, as my donor— Jake, do they know?"

"It's not much of a secret, Johann. Judge McCampbell knows, I think Alec knows, too." (Joan, if he doesn't know, tell him. And don't forget our name!) (What do you think I'm leading up to?)

"All right. My donor, Eunice Branca, my former secretary and the sweetest, loveliest girl I've ever known, was not only a perfect secretary; she was a beauty contest winner not many years back. I know what a treasure I inherited from her. I don't wear her body with the charming grace she gave it—but I'm trying to learn." (You're learning, Boss.)

"It is the opinion of this court that you have learned."

"Shut up, Mac. Brother Schmidt, I agree with him merely because he's right."

"Thank you both—on behalf of Eunice Branca. Jake? Now that court has adjourned do I have to wear this Mother Hubbard? It's too warm."

"That's up to you. I suppose it depends on how much you have on under it."

"Mmm . . . perhaps I'd better not. Minimum decency under the customs of today—but it would get a burlesque queen thirty days back when I was a youngster." (Exhibitionist. You're asking to be coaxed.) (Certainly. And who taught me? At least the bra isn't just paint, like that mermaid outfit *you* zapped *me* with.)

ALEC TRAIN said, "Brother Schmidt, in identity cases it is sometimes necessary to require the challenged individual to strip completely. Birthmarks and scars and such—tell her, Judge."

"Not in my court. Ignore him, Brother Schmidt. I wouldn't call that lovely Grecian robe a 'Mother Hubbard.' But I can see that it was intended for outdoors and I'll happily hang it up for you."

"Uh . . . oh, goodness, I'm hav-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing trouble shucking off my early-twentieth-century Puritanism. Jake has seen me in the nothing-much girls wear today, and he's seen Eunice in even less than I have on under this; Eunice wasn't shy about sharing her beauty." (You milked *that*, didn't you, dearie? Which one are you after?) (Shut up!) Joan ran a finger down the magnostrip, let the robe fall open; Alec Train hurried to claim it ahead of the judge.

Then she posed. "See? This is almost the way Eunice Branca looked—except that she walked in glory, always . . . while I am an old man who is trying to learn to wear her body." Besides Eunice's body, Joan was wearing some of Winnie's clothes—black frill skirt, translucent black Cling-On cups, six-inch sticktite stilt sandals that left her pretty feet in view—no paint, just restrained enhancement with rouge and shadow.

She posed, they stared. Jake cleared his throat louder than usual. "Joan, had I known what you were wearing—not wearing, rather—under that robe, I would have advised you to keep it on."

"Oh, pooh, Jake, you wouldn't have scolded Eunice for dressing this way. But that brings up something I must ask. Judge, I can't go on being Johann Smith. Will you let me change my name?"

"That's not properly put, Brother Schmidt. You can have any name you like. At most a court confirms it. You mean that you need a girl's name now. Helen; perhaps? Or Cleopatra?"

"Thank you—for Eunice." (Boss, find out if Judge is still married.) (Go back to sleep!) "Not either of those names. I want to be known as Joan—for Johann—Joan . . . Eunice . . . Smith."

Judge McCampbell looked surprised, then smiled in approval. "A good choice. The flavor of your masculine name, plus, I assume, a tribute to your donor. But may I offer a word of advice? You can start calling yourself that today—"

"I already have."

"I noticed that Jake called you Joan. But let it be a family name, and keep your masculine name at other times—use it to sign letters, checks, and so forth—until your identity has been finally established—in the Supreme Court if possible. Don't cloud the issue."

"I gave her the same advice," Salomon put in.

"I'm not surprised. Miss—Brother Schmidt, what do you want me to call you? In private."

"Why, either Joan or Eunice. Both by preference, as I do not want anyone ever to forget Eunice Branca. Me least of all—I want to be reminded of my benefactor. Benefactrix. But don't call me 'Miss' in private. Look, brothers, as Brother Schmidt I am half a century older than you two . . . but as Joan Eunice I am only a few weeks old. However, Eunice's body is that of a young woman, and that is what I am learning—must learn—to be. You could have daughters my age. So please call me Joan Eunice and save Miss Smith for court appearances." She smiled. "Or Brother Schmidt if you wish—although Yonny was what I was called by our brothers in my chapter."

Alec said, "Joan Eunice Brother

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yonny Schmidt, I'm pleased to call you whatever you like, and I don't have daughters your age and you make me feel younger just to look at you. But I'm not speaking for my roommate and I'd hate to tell you how old some of *his* offspring are; he was the scourge of P.S. Two-thirty-eight—stay away from him and let me protect you. And did I mention how happy I am that Mrs. Seward fired me? Brother Joan Eunice, I would never have been in this case other than as a favor to Parkinson's mother-in-law. But at first it did look like a straightforward case of protecting the interests of an invalid too ill to protect himself. Believe me."

"Don't listen to him," advised the judge. "He's an ambulance chaser. I throw legitimate business his way just to protect the good name of our Brothers. But back to this matter of identity. Joan Eunice, I don't know how much law you know—"

"Just what has rubbed off in the course of a long and evil life. I depend on experts. Such as Jake."

"I see. Well, your granddaughters probably think it is wrong of me to help you establish your identity. It is not. True, in a civil suit or a criminal action a judge must be impartial. But such a matter as establishing identity is neither one, and there is no rule of law or equity which prohibits a court from being helpful. The situation is like that of a citizen who has lost his passport and appeals to his consul. The consul doesn't sit as a judge; he tries to get the mixup straightened out. So—Jake, you've been in the Law much longer than I have; do you want my opinions?"

"I am always most happy to have Judge McCampbell's opinions on any matter."

"I THINK I'll reconvene court and slam you for contempt. After I've finished this drink. All right, you're going to get 'em anyhow. Do you anticipate any difficulty in proving that the brain of Brother Schmidt was moved into the body of Eunice Branca?"

"None. A nuisance but no difficulty."

"Or in showing that this body—this lovely body—was once that of Eunice Branca?"

"Same answer."

"What evidence?"

"Police reports, photographs, hospital personnel and so forth."

"Let's say it's my court. I'm going to make you go back and touch second at every opportunity. I intentionally got into the record today that ruling based on 'Parson's estate vs Rhode Island;' I think it's important—"

"So do I."

"Thank you. In following the principle that identity lies in the brain and nowhere else—" (We could tell him something, couldn't we, Boss?) (Yes, beloved—but we aren't going to!)—"I am going to be as tough as possible. No depositions when it is possible to bring the witness into court. Photographs and other records not only allowed but required—but the originals must be brought into court, not copies, and photographers or record keepers must appear

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and identify same, and the surgeons or others whose work appears in those films, photographs, or records must appear and confirm each record. Do you know if each body was fingerprinted just prior to surgery?"

"Not of my own knowledge. Damn it, I was taken by surprise today—and at the time of Eunice Branca's death I had other things worrying me."

Joan Eunice reached over and squeezed his hand.

Alec Train said, "I can help on that. When Parkinson brought Mrs. Seward to see me, I checked on that point at once. Prints were taken from both bodies—so I gave identity no further thought. That's why *I* was taken as much by surprise as you two. I don't know what chimney-corner lawyer put the idea in Mrs. Seward's head—Parkinson, probably: I'm sure he's stayed at her elbow all through—but I received instructions just as court convened. I'm not spilling any privileged communication when I say that—nor do I know of any canon which forbids me to say that I am damn sick of both Mrs. Seward and Parkinson."

"Hmm. Every possible bit of evidence," McCampbell went on. "You will have to trace that brain out of that body—Joan Eunice—no, Jake. Jake, do you know what became of Johann Smith's body?"

"That one I can answer. Here we have a unique case of a body becoming a chattel while the person who lived in it is still alive. I knew what Johann Smith—Joan Eunice, that is—had wanted done with it, as his will contains the standard 'donated for medical research' clause. But the will did not control because Johann Smith was, and is, alive. The Medical Center asked what to do with it. I told them to hold it, in their morgue. I assume that it is still there."

Mr. Train said, "Counselor, I hope you're right. But unless that cadaver was nailed down, two gets you ten that some eager medical student has chopped it up."

The judge said, "I'm afraid Alec could be right. Jake, it may be a matter of great urgency to perpetuate the evidence—*all* the evidence. Verb. sap. We all know how key evidence has a way of disappearing when big money is involved. And besides eager medical students—well, we all know that almost any illegal act is for sale at a price. Films and records can be stolen, others substituted, ostensibly respectable witnesses can be bribed. Let's speculate for a moment that Brother Schmidt is opposed by nameless dishonest persons, persons willing to bribe, suborn, and so forth. Such crime is not cheap. Does anyone have a guess as to how much money might be used to destroy or change the evidence?"

Jake said, "I won't guess. But in the case of four nameless females I can find out."

JOAN said, "I can help a little on this. Marla and Elinor lost their father before they were of age and his estate wound up minus and no insurance to speak of. So I supported my daughter Roberta until she died and kept her kids in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

school until they flunked out, then continued to support them until each married—one of their grievances against me is that I stopped their allowances when they married. But I continued a credit watch on them as I did not want any descendant of mine to become a charge on the taxpayers. Much the same with the other two girls except that Jim Darlington outlasted my daughter Evelyn, and both girls—Johanna and June—married while their parents were living. To put it briefly, unless one of them has come into some windfall, all four could not scrape together enough money to tackle any really expensive crime."

"I'm glad to hear it," said McCampbell. "Just the same, Jake, time is of the essence in preserving evidence—and I want you to know that this court will give you all possible legal help in protecting and perpetuating any evidence you dig up. Unh, Alec and I plan to be away four days—but I'll leave my emergency wavelength with Sperling and will bounce back here if you need me."

"Thank you, sir."

"Wait a minute," said Alec Train. "There *is* money in this case. Mac, you know how I am about fees."

"Yes. Larcenous."

"Ignore him, Brother Schmidt. I tailor my fees, all the way from zero up to outrageous. In this case I did not want the job so I demanded an outrageous retainer against a, yes, larcenous per diem—and Parkinson paid without a quiver. Through Mrs. Seward—but there was no question as to who called the tune. The question is, will Parkinson go on paying . . . and is he willing to hire his friendly, neighborhood safe-cracker to go after some necessary link? I don't know—especially as it isn't his money, but his mother-in-law's."

"I don't know either," answered Jake, "but I always assume that my opponent might cheat if I fail to cut the cards. I'm going after that evidence with all possible speed. Sorry, Joan, I should have anticipated this—I'm getting old." (He is *not*. Tell him so, Boss.)

Joan Eunice patted his hand. "Jake, you are *not* getting old and there was no reason to anticipate this. Gentlemen, let me say again, I don't care a whit if my granddaughters win. If they win, they lose—because if they prove me legally dead, I have cut them off with that shilling. And, thanks to Eunice Branca and Dr. Boyle and Jake Salomon, I'm young and healthy and enjoying life and not distressed at the idea of losing a fortune that has become a burden to me."

Alec Train said, "Brother Schmidt Joan Eunice honey, don't you realize that it is unAmurrican to talk that way about millions of dollars?"

She grinned at him. "Brother Alec, if I come out of this broke, I'll bet you a million dollars that I can net a million dollars after taxes in the next five years, starting from scratch. Jake, will you back my bet? Since it calls for me starting broke?"

"Certainly."

"Wait a minute!" Train pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tested. "I'm just a poor but honest lawyer. Will you make that bet fifty cents? Mac, will you lend me fifty cents?"

"Not without security. Joan Eunice, listen, please. I don't doubt that you are willing to tackle the world broke. But I know in my heart that you are indeed Brother Johann Schmidt . . . who okayed a loan to me when I really needed it. Old Eata Bita Pi didn't let me down . . . and I'm not going to let Brother Schmidt down."

"Thank you, Brother Mac."

Jake growled, "You frat house aristocrats made me sick when I was in college and I don't like it much better today. Judge, the only good reason for giving Joan Eunice a hand is because it's the fair thing to do. Not because she—he—okayed a loan years ago to some snot-nose fraternity brother."

"Counselor, your point is well taken. I think I can truthfully say that I have never allowed fraternal bonds—including Shriner, which you and I are—to affect my behavior on the bench—"

"The hell it hasn't, old buddy mine; you rule against me just for the hell of it. Ask anybody."

"—even when I've been forced to instruct this Irishman in the finer points of the law. I would have helped in this matter in any case; both as a citizen and as a ward of the court Joan Eunice is entitled to any help a court can offer in establishing her identity. But I confess that my emotions were aroused by a circumstance that I did not dream existed. Not that Joan Eunice is my fraternity brother—that is simply a pleasing coincidence—but that she—he at that time—gave me a hand when it mattered. Uh—" stared at his glass— "no need to go into details. You know them, Joan Eunice?"

"Yes."

"You can tell Jake later. Let me list the things I think are necessary in this case; both of you lawyers check me—and I'm going to stick a fresh tape in this thing so that we can all have copies." He turned to his clerk's recording equipment. "That is I *think* I am going to. Damn! Excuse me, Joan Eunice. I wonder if Sperling has gone home."

(Let's look at that thing, dear.) "I'm 'Brother Schmidt' any time you feel like swearing, Judge. May I look at your recorder? It's a bit like one I have at home."

"Go ahead. I sometimes wish we still used shorthand reporters."

"Thank you." (How about it, Eunice?) (It's Betsy's idiot baby sister, no huhu. You whistle Yankee Doodle or think about Judgie Wudgie and don't bother me.) (Om Mani Padme Hum. Om Mani Padme Hum. Om Mani Padme —) (Got it, dearie.) "Recording with a fresh tape, Judge; set for three copies, and erase memory."

McCAMPBELL said, "I'm amazed every time I find someone who understands machinery."

"I don't, really. But Eunice Branca taught me to run one somewhat like yours." (Boss, you're learning how to lie—just tell the truth but not all of it.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Honey girl, I *invented* that way of lying way back when your great grandmother was a virgin.)

"First, Eunice Branca's death must be established. As it was murder, we will assume extensive records with positive identification including fingerprints—and since they are police records, we must also assume that they are vulnerable to any determined and well-financed attempt to destroy or replace them. Then Mrs. Branca's body must be followed into surgery and positive identification of the body again established at that point. Johann Schmidt's body must also be followed to that point and positively identified just before surgery. Then we must be certain beyond any doubt that the brain was removed from the Schmidt body—Joan Eunice, this must be distressing to you. Would you like to retire to my washroom? There's a couch in there."

"Please go ahead, sir; I've learned to live with it." (Makes *me* feel like throwing up, Boss.) (Me, too, darling—but we aren't going to; we're going to look solemnly serene. Om Mani Padme Hum.) (Om Mani Padme Hum. Let's make a lotus; this chair is big enough.) (Yes, darling. Om Mani Padme Hum.)

"—and finally, in court, we will take Joan Eunice's fingerprints, have them compared by experts with each earlier set, and thereby forge the final link. Joan Eunice, do I simply switch this off now?"

(After the three copies pop out, it will shut itself off.) "When the three copies pop out, it will erase and shut off. Jake, we're keeping these gentlemen from their fishing."

"Those fish aren't restless," the judge assured her. "Just a moment." He stepped to his closed-circuit viewphone. "Evelyn."

"Yes, Judge."

"How are things outside? Quiet?"

"Judge, how did you guess? I've got three men in the infirmary and the building is buttoned up. You might take a look on three and four, and then play back the sixteen o'clock spot news."

"How badly were your men hurt?"

"Nothing serious. One with a lungful of sneeze gas when we had to clear the main entrance and seal the riot doors, one with a flesh wound on a cheekbone, and the third with cracked ribs. My guess is the newsies bought 'emselves a riot, as cameras were in position when the trouble started."

"I see. Are we going to need the Guard?"

"I wouldn't say so. The police have the streets around us pretty well patrolled and our own people are either staying overnight, or being taken off the top by chopper. Message from Judge Anders—says there's no reason for you not to go fishing and he'll assume that he's presiding judge pro tem. He's staying in his chambers tonight."

"I'll call him and thank him."

The judge switched to view three, studied it. "Doesn't look too rough. Just the same they ought to tear this building down and build a stronger one farther from any Abandoned Area." He switched to view four. "Oh-oh!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The room filled with crowd roar, the screen showed a milling mob. Moving slowly through the crowd were two police Merrimac tanks, their loudspeakers monotonously repeating the warning-to-disperse. "Brother Schmidt, does your house have a copter landing?"

Joan shook her head. "No, it's designed so that a copter *can't* land on it. It seemed the safer choice when it was built."

"Well . . . I could put you into any enclave by copter. Or you could stay here overnight."

Jake said, "Judge, my car is a Rolls-Skoda. We'll be all right."

"I can't force you to stay. But let's get a playback on the news and see what stirred up the lice." McCampbell punched the time in, then punched for playback.

HEADLINE of the Hour! Brain Transplant Fraud! Our earlier flash has been confirmed; the sensational brain transplant of Tycoon Johann Smith was a hoax. The question is, did he die a natural death? Or was he murdered? The latter theory seems likely in view of today's bald-faced attempt to steal his enormous fortune through claiming in open court that his alleged former secretary, a woman of doubtful reputation going by the name of 'Blanca—' "

Salomon growled, "Judge, would you mind shutting off that damned rot?"

McCampbell switched it off. "Seems I started something. Can't say I'm sorry. I will *not* let my courtroom be turned into a circus."

Joan Eunice said meekly, "I'm sorry, Judge."

"Eh? Joan Eunice, you are not at fault. You were forced into court needlessly and against your will; you did nothing. As for me, I hold to the old-fashioned ideal that a courtroom is where the Sovereign is present in person, dispensing equity and justice to all . . . *not* bread-and-circuses for the rabble. As long as I'm on the bench I'll run it that way, no matter how many news snoops get sore or how many illits want a livelier show."

"I'm sorry your bailiffs were hurt."

"Well, so am I. But they aren't conscripts, they are career people who know it is hazardous. And they are necessary—if that bill ever passes to disarm bailiffs, that day I quit the bench . . . and the Law as well. Jake?"

"Yes, Mac?"

"You can risk your neck if you want to, but even a Rolls-Skoda is not a Merrimac. Enough people can tip it over, then they can build a bonfire around it and roast you like chestnuts . . . and there are characters out there who would do it just for kicks. No, not a word out of you; I'm not going to let her leave this building in a ground car even if I have to reconvene court for three seconds and make her a ward again. She leaves by copter. The question is, where does she go? You could sleep in my chambers, Joan Eunice; there is a buttery in the bar and the washroom is a complete bath and that couch opens into a bed. Lumpy, I'm afraid." (Ask Judgie Wudgie if *he* goes with the bed!) (I didn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hear you—and now pipe down.)

"I was going to say," Jake said mildly, "that I have a house in Safe Harbor. Unstaffed and empty but it's a safe rendezvous. You could have your chief bailiff tell my driver and shotgun to wait until this quiets down; then pick us up there—although I would bet on those boys to drive through any mob and not let the car be tipped; they're mean."

"No doubt. And wind up with a hit-and-run, too; we'll do it the easy way. Either of you want to use my washroom while I phone Evelyn and the roof?"

A few minutes later Jake and Joan were about to leave; the Judge's copter was waiting for them, he having brushed aside remarks about fish. Joan said, "Judge? I think you know I am grateful, but I would like to show my thanks by doing something—money, I mean—for those men who were hurt."

"No."

"Why not? Oh, I know it was not my fault but nevertheless they were hurt because of me. You know I can afford it."

"Because they are officers of the court and I would have to treat it as constructive bribery. Tell her Jake."

"He's correct, Joan—although he's being stuffy about it."

"Not too stuffy. Joan Eunice, there is an enclave home for dependents of police, bailiffs, firemen, and such, killed in line of duty. Jake can tell you about it. I would rather not hear what you do about it."

"I see." Joan ignored the fact that Jake was waiting with her robe, stepped closer to McCampbell, turned her face up and put her arms around his neck. "Does this constitute bribery?"

"I think so," McCampbell answered, putting his arms around her. "But I won't analyze it."

"Of course it's bribery! Get away from him, Brother Schmidt! *I* handle his bribes."

"Shut up, you noisy Mick."

Joan turned her face just as her lips were about to touch McCampbell's. "You're next on my bribe list, Brother Alec."

"So get back into line! R.H.I.P." McCampbell stopped any further words from her; she let her lips come softly open, did not hurry him. (Whee . . . *ooo!* I thought so.) (Don't let me faint, Eunice.)

Some seconds later she opened her eyes, looked up into the judge's face. "My goodness!" she said softly.

Alec Train tapped his shoulder. "Court's adjourned, Judge. Be elsewhere."

Joan gave the judge a quick, possessive squeeze, untangled herself and went into his former roommate's arms, turned up her face. She was careful to make this kiss as long and as warm as the other. (*Unh!* What do you think, Eunice?) (They are both oral as hell and they kiss almost as well as Jake and if Jake weren't here they would have us down on the rug this instant—break it up, dear; you've kissed him as long as you did Judgie Wudgie and Jake is getting edgy.) (All right. Spoilsport.) (Not at all—but you don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know how to handle men without upsetting them. Break!)

A MOMENT later Jake silently helped her into her street robe. She thanked him, clicked the magnostrip, arranged the shoulder drape, let the judge hand her into his lift. They said goodbye, the lift closed. Alec Train turned to his friend:

"Mac, kissing Brother Schmidt is more emphatic than spreading most gals."

"Amen!"

"What would it be like to be married to her? And why is it that when the parade goes by I'm always out for a short beer?"

"The O.B. damaged your head with his forceps. That's why they had to make a lawyer out of you."

"How about yourself?"

"Oh, me, too—stipulated. I wasn't bright enough to be a lawyer; I had to wangle an appointment to the bench. Christ, what a chick!"

"Passed by acclamation. Mac, having kissed her, do you really think she can be old 'Sell 'em Johann,' the terrible-tempered tycoon?"

"Well . . . everything fits—and she did have the Grip."

"And the password; I checked. But, Mac, any of our brothers, even ones whose bias hardly extends to girls, would sell our secrets—what am I saying—would *give* them to that one. If she kissed him."

"Stipulating that you are correct in your estimate of our brothers—and I agree—Joan Eunice can't have had much chance to subvert one of them. Jake has practically had her under house arrest, at my suggestion. And Jake himself—well, he sounded like a Barb, but you can check it in that bookcase, in 'Who's Who in Law.'"

"I don't think I can walk that far. But let's assume that old Johann was a brother—easy to check—and she did know all about the Distress Fund and the fact that you needed a loan our senior year."

"Yes. That's the convincer."

"No, it's not. I mean that *Johann* would have been just as susceptible. She was his secretary; it might have amused him to spill fraternal secrets to her—Grip, password, even details about the fund."

"Oh, crap, you honkie bastard. Joan Eunice is just what she purports to be—an utterly delicious girl who has Johann's brain in her skull. Alec, I concede that Joan Eunice doesn't seem much like Johann Smith. But even you might be socially acceptable if that sponge between your ears were placed in the brain pan of a creature as delectable as she is." The judge shook his head. "She's enough to make a queen switch from A.C. to D.C."

"Man, she really got to you, didn't she?"

"And *you*, my friend. *Who* said we needed a vacation from women? You, as I recall. But you drooled over her. You would give up boys for life if she were to phone and ask for you. Don't try to fool your roomie; I know you better than Ruth does."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I won't argue. But you're at least as far down the Street as I am, Mac . . . and she affected you the same way. Uh, does Norma know how little fishing we plan to do?"

"Sure she suspects. But she's always been tolerant. Alec, how disappointed would you be if I called off our trip? Jake may need a friendly judge in a hurry. Especially if those vultures find a shyster unscrupulous enough to buy some direct action. I'd hate to be missing if Brother Schmidt needed me."

"My God, a soul with a soul. Oddly enough I was thinking the same thing. Can't let Brother Schmidt down. Mac, could it prejudice anything if I volunteered my services—free—to Jake? If this gets sticky, he's going to need to be several places at once. I could share the load."

"And share the wealth. It would give you an excuse to see Brother Schmidt again."

"Any law against taking a profit? But Jake does need help."

"And you're familiar with the case. Alec old dear, it's a noble thought. While you did represent the petitioners, not only have they fired you, but this was never an adversary situation; theoretically those creeps are as anxious to arrive at the truth for the benefit of their beloved grandfather as Jake is. They don't dare admit that they are trying to grab his gelt."

"I wonder if Jake has a phone in that empty house he mentioned? If not, I can leave word at the Gibraltar Club—he has rooms there—and at Johann Smith's town house. And with Jake's answering service."

"Yes. But let the call be from me; it might speed the service. We'll stay and wait for it. Ruth's not expecting you, Norma is not expecting me; I'll have dinner sent up from the basement."

"Clear thinking. So fix fresh drinks while I put in those calls. Hey! You can reach them in your copter."

"Only via the piloting circuit. Not private. Better we keep this *tight*. Alec, it is unlikely that Jake will have anything for you to do before morning. But he might—a trip to the coast or such. You could stay on call by spending the night here."

"Well!" Alec Train stopped with his hand near the phone. "Roomie, I thought that Brother Schmidt had driven all other thoughts out of your mind. Or did I misunderstand?"

"Let's phrase it this way: It would be pleasant to discuss Brother Schmidt in intimate detail with some sympathetic person who appreciates her as much as I do."

"In that case, mix those drinks and start a lukewarm shower. I'll join you as fast as I can."

XIV

JAKE SALOMON handed Joan Eunice into the Judge's copter, got in beside her and locked the door. Quickly they were airborne. The passenger compartment was separate from the pilot's space and well soundproofed; conversation was possible. But he said nothing and kept his eyes away from her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joan let it go on only a short time. "Jake dear? Are you angry?"

"Eh? Heavens, no. What made you think so?"

"You seemed quite distant. I thought you might be annoyed with me for having kissed Judge McCampbell and dear Mr. Train."

"Your business."

"Oh, Jake. Please don't scold me even by your manner. I've had a difficult day, especially the time I had to spend with my goddam granddaughters. It hurts, Jake, to be hated. To know that someone wants you dead. Yet I had to try to appear serene and ladylike. Be a credit to Eunice. Jake, it isn't easy to be a lady—after almost a century of being male. Do you know how I manage it at all? I say to myself, 'What would Eunice do?'—then I try to do it. Kissing those sweet and helpful men—Jake, I'm not used to kissing men. You could have trained me but you won't give me more than a good-night peck. I said to myself, 'I must thank them—and what would Eunice do?' I decided that she would kiss them the best she knew how. So I tried, even though I don't know how. Well? Is that what Eunice would have done?"

"Well . . . yes, Eunice would have kissed them." (He knows darn well I would have, dear.) (I know. He's being difficult.) (So keep punching. Tell him how wonderful he is. Joan, men *always* believe it when you tell them they are wonderful.)

"Then I don't see why you are being cold with me, Jake. I thought you were truly wonderful all day long, the way you handled things and protected me. I wanted to kiss *you* for being so wonderful—and would have, and will!—if only you would let me. Was it because I didn't stop to put my robe on before I kissed them?"

"Well . . . it would have been more ladylike."

(Punch hard on this one, dearie—for Jake knows darn well that I spread skin on him the very first time I kissed him . . . and later I kissed him bare naked the first time it was safe to. He didn't fight—he was eager.) (I'll try.)

Miss Smith looked worried, which did not suit her features. "I suppose so. But I don't know *how* to be a lady, Jake; the rules have changed so much. Eunice often startled me by what she did and how she dressed—yet I am certain that she was always a perfect lady. Tell me this, Jake, honestly and candidly, and I'll treat your answer as Gospel and use it as a yardstick for future behavior—because I *do* want to be a credit to Eunice; I want 'Joan Eunice' to be the perfect lady that Eunice was. Under those exact circumstances and being just as anxious to show appreciation to two sweet and wonderfully helpful gentlemen . . . would Eunice have put this street robe on first? Or would she have spread her sweet skin on them and let them cuddle her a bit if they wanted to—and they wanted to, I'm sure you noticed. Think about it, Jake. You knew Eunice better than I did; we know that—so give me a straight answer, because I'm going to use it as a guide in trying to *be* Eunice. Would she have played safe? Or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would she have given herself?"

Jake Salomon gave a sigh that was almost a groan. "Hell, you did *exactly* what Eunice would have done. That's what upset me."

Joan sighed. "Thank you, Jake, I feel better." She loosened her seat belt, moved closer to him, ran her thumb down the magnostrip of her robe. "Can't get this pesky thing off in here. Kiss me, Jake, kiss me better than they did. Kiss me and cuddle me and tell me that Eunice would be proud of me."

"Joan!"

"Don't shame me, Jake. I'm a girl now and I need to be kissed so hard we'll forget I kissed those other two. Call me Eunice, dear; please do—it's my name and I want to hear you call me by it and tell me I'm a good girl."

He groaned. "Eunice!"

She turned her face up. "Kiss me, darling."

Trembling, he gave in.

The kiss went on and on. It took Joan only seconds to turn it from tender to rugged, nor did he hold back. (Eunice? I'm going to faint.) (I'm not going to let you, sweetheart; I've waited a *long* time for this!)

Eventually Jake broke, but she stayed close and he continued to hold her. She sighed and touched her hand to his face. "Thank you, Jake dear—for this, and for everything."

"Thank *you* . . . Eunice. Joan Eunice."

"Let me be Eunice a while longer. Am I a good girl? Do I do credit to her?"

"Uh . . . yes!"

"I tried. Jake dear, do you believe in ghosts? I think Eunice must have been here with us. I couldn't have done that well without her help. It often seems so."

"Uh, it's an interesting thought." (Hmmph! We ought to tickle him for that. Joan, if you tickle him under his short ribs, he comes unstuck. Helpless.) (I'll remember. But not today.) "In any case, she would have been proud of you. You're a sweet girl."

"I mean to be. To you. I love you, Jake."

He hesitated only a heartbeat. "I love you—Eunice. And Joan Eunice."

"I'm glad you made it both of us. Jake, dearest, you're going to have to marry me. You know that, don't you?"

"What? Oh, heavens, dear, don't be silly. I love you—but there's too much age difference."

"What? Oh, fiddlesticks! I know I'm almost a quarter of a century older than you are. But it no longer shows. And you understand me and no other man possibly could."

"*Huh!* I mean *I* am too much older than *you*."

(Joan, don't let him talk that way! Tell him men and liquor improve with age. Or some such. Anyhow, he was feeling quite young a few minutes ago—I noticed. Did you?) (Yes. Now quiet, please.)

"JAKE, you are *not* old. Goodness, I know what *'old'* is! You're a classic, Jake—and classics improve with age. And . . . just minutes ago, you were feeling quite young. I noticed."

"Uh . . . possibly. But none of your sass—youngster."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She chuckled. "Jake, it's nice to be a girl to you. I won't argue, I'll wait. In time you will realize that you need me and I need you, and that no one else will do for either of us. Then you can make an honest woman of me."

"Harrumph! That might be more than I could manage, even with a marriage license."

"Rude darling. I can wait. You can't escape me, Jake. Eunice won't let you."

"Well . . . I'm durned if I'll argue; it would just make you stubborn. In either of your *personae*. My old friend Johann was as stubborn a man as I've ever met—and Eunice was just as stubborn in her own sweet way. And, dear, I never know which one you are. Sometimes I think you've acquired that split personality your doctors were afraid of."

(Get him off this subject!) (I will, dear—but not by being jumpy about it. Aren't we ever going to tell him?) (Yes, of course. But not soon, Joan. Not till we're in the clear. Remember those straps.) "Jake darling, I'm not surprised that you feel that way about me—because I do myself. Oh, nothing psychopathic, just the odd situation I am in. You've known me how long? A quarter century."

"Twenty-six years, pushing twenty-seven."

"Yes. And while I was never given to copping feels from female employees would you say that 'horny old bastard' was an honest description of me?"

"I've never known your behavior toward women to be other than gentlemanly."

"Oh, come now, Jake! You're talking to Johann at the moment. Level with me."

Salomon grinned. "Johann, I think you were a horny old bastard right up to the day we took you in for surgery."

"That's better. Years after I was benched in the matter . . . first for social reasons, the fact that an old man looks a fool if he behaves like a young stud, and later through illness and physical incapacity—years after I was benched my interest in a pretty face or a pretty leg was unflagging. Then I acquired Eunice's healthy young body. Female. Look at me Jake. *Female.*"

"I've noticed!"

"Not the way *I* have! Even though you've kissed me—a real kiss and I loved it, dear—you can't have noticed the way *I* have been forced to. I'm cyclic now, Jake, ruled by the Moon; I've menstruated twice. Do you know what that means?"

"Eh? Natural phenomenon. Healthy."

"It means that the body controls the brain as much as the brain controls the body. I'm tempery and inclined to tears just before my period. My feelings, my emotions, even my thoughts are female—yet I have almost a century of male emotions and attitudes. Take my pretty little nurse-companion, Winnie—and would you *like* to take her?"

"Uh . . . damn you, Johann! She's a nice girl. Fifth Amendment."

"She is indeed a nice girl. But because I'm Eunice as well as Jo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hann. *I* know how she feels. She's as female as a cat in heat—and you're an old bull, Jake, and dominant, and if you *wanted* to take Winnie she wouldn't put up more than token resistance."

"Joan Eunice, don't talk nonsense. I'm three times her age." (Boss, what are you getting at?) (I'm not sure but I'm getting there.) (Well, don't get Winnie knocked up on the way. I thought we were saving Jake for *us*.) (Don't be a pig, little piglet. Winnie's a nurse; she sees to her contras as carefully as she cleans her teeth.) "Jake, dear, I'm not much older than Winnie in my body . . . and you've known and loved this body, even though I have no memory of it. We know that Eunice was always a lady—so how did you ever manage to get started with her? Did you rape her?" (Hell, no, *I* raped *him*—but he was a pushover.)

"That's a most unfair question!"

"IT'S a very female question. Knowing you from many years of association—and knowing Eunice both from some years of association but most importantly from now having her body and glands and hormones and deepest emotions—I suspect that you were far too proud to make a pass at her so she found some way to make clear that you were welcome. Once you were *certain* that Eunice was not trying to make a fool of you—that settled it. Well? Am I right?" (If he says No, he's lying. It took five minutes, Sis—and would have been all over in ten but we were interrupted. Had to wait till next day. Remember the mermaid getup? Had to scrub it off before I went home; Jake and I ruined it—and I had to tell Joe a sincere fib.) (Did he believe you?) (I think so. He was painting . . . which means he hardly noticed anything else.)

"Jake, are you going to answer? Or let me draw my own conclusions—possibly mistaken?"

"I could answer that it's none of your business!"

"And you would be right and Johann apologizes. But *not* Eunice. Jake, that's what Eunice's body tells me must have happened. But I can't be certain and I do want to be like her and if that is *not* what she would have done because it is not what she did—then tell me. I'm not asking for intimate details." (Aw, get the juicy parts, dearie—I want to know how it seemed to *him*, every sweaty detail. I already know how it seemed to *me*—and I'll tell you.) (Don't be so right-now, darling—I'm trying to gentle him.)

"Joan Eunice—no, Eunice! You always have had the damnedest way of getting your own way."

"Is that an answer, Jake? I don't have Eunice's memory." (Says who? Boss, I've figured out something—and it's not flatworms. Everyone has erasable memory and non-erasable memory, just like Betsy—and that non-erasable part is the *me* that's still here now that I'm dead. 'Soul' maybe. Names don't matter; it's the part that's not just glands and plumbing.) (Save the philosophy until we're alone in bed tonight, Eunice; I'm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trying to cope with a man—and it's heavy going.) (Do you think we're going to be *alone* in bed tonight? Want to bet?) (I don't know—and I'm *scared*.) (Don't be scared. When it happens, you recite the Money Hum and I'll drive. Once around the course and you'll be ready to solo. Except that I'll always be with you. Know sumpin, Boss honey? It's even nicer to *be* you than it was to be your secretary. Or will be, once we're back on ground rations.) (Huh?) (Soul talk, dear—means sex. I had it for fourteen years—and I'm *hungry*.) (I had it over five times that long—I'm at least five times as hungry.) (Could be—you're a horny bitch, Boss.)

JAKE finally answered, "Joan, I don't think it's fair to Eunice's memory for me to tell tales about her—but I'll concede your point, assuming that you want to learn, for your own guidance, as much as possible about how she behaved. Eunice was honest and straightforward—" (I'm devious as a snake—but that's what I wanted Jake to believe.)—"and she apparently decided that she liked me that much . . . and made it easy for me. It was neither rape nor seduction." (It was both, but I did *not* want him to think so. He's a darling, Joan. When he's gentled enough—slip the bit into his mouth. But let him think he asked for it.) (I'll try. Meantime I'm still doing this emotional strip-down—and you listen instead of interrupting; you might learn someting about *me*.) (I'll be good, Boss. Mostly.)

"I felt certain that it must have been that way, Jake—knowing you, knowing her. But that's only one side of me as I am now—the 'Eunice' side. The other side is Johann, with almost a century of male orientation. I told you I now understand Winnie, as a girl—because now I *am* a girl. But there is still Johann, alone with Winnie every day—and it's all I can manage to keep my hands off her." (Hmmph! You *don't* keep your hands off her.) (I said, Shut up! I haven't let it get past heavy cuddle. If you and I ever stroll Gay Street, you shameless mermaid, it will be dessert, not the piéce de résistance.) (That piece won't resist!) (Hush up!) Do you understand, Jake? Old Johann—*me!*—thinks that Winnie is quite some dish."

"Well . . . I understand it—in Johann."

"I wonder if you would understand it in Eunice? Jake, how do you feel about homosexuality?"

"I don't feel anything about it. Never been interested."

"Not even curious? Jake, I'm a full generation older than you are. When I was a kid, homosexuality or 'perversion' as it was called, was hardly even a myth; I never heard of it until long after I was centered on girls. Oh, I don't mean there wasn't any; I know now that there was, lots of it. But it was spoken of seldom and kept under cover. When I was fifteen, a man made a pass at me—and I didn't know what he was after; he just scared me.

"Would a fifteen-year-old boy today be that innocent? You know he wouldn't be; there are books and magazines and pictures—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other boys—to make certain that he understands even if he doesn't join in. The government just misses endorsing it as a way to hold down our outlandish overpopulation—would endorse it openly, I feel sure, if it were not that a large percentage disapprove of it publicly while practicing it in private. It reminds me of that weird period in my youth when people voted dry and drank wet and the bootlegger was more sought after than the black-market butcher is today. How long has it been since the last 'sex offense' was prosecuted?"

"Rape by violence is still prosecuted; I can't recall any others in the last twenty years. Blue laws about sex are dead letters; Supreme Court decisions have made them impossible to prosecute. Correction: unlicensed pregnancy is a Federal offense under the 'General Welfare' clause . . . but I've often wondered what would happen if a case were ever allowed to reach the Supreme Court."

"That's the only 'sex crime' that was not a crime when I was a kid, Jake. But I was talking about the 'crime against nature' which is no longer a crime; it isn't even a peccadillo, it arouses less disapproval than smoking. However by the time homosexuality was socially acceptable, my attitudes were long frozen. But I wonder what Eunice thought about it? Did you ever discuss it with her?"

Jake snorted. "Believe me, Johann—sorry, Joan Eunice—that was *not* a subject we had time for!"

"I suppose not. Nor did she discuss it with me." (Fibber!) "But she gave me a gentle reprimand about it once."

"So? How?"

"Oh, one day before I was bedfast, a messenger delivered something to my office. He was a real nancy-pants—lots of makeup, false eyelashes, curled hair, and he waved his hips. A high, girlish lisp and oh, so graceful in his gestures. After he was gone I made some intolerant remark and Eunice told me gently that, while she didn't find such one-way boys attractive, she didn't see anything wrong in a man's loving man or a woman's loving a woman." (Hey! I don't remember any such conversation.) (So I'm a liar. But you *could* have said it—and I'm making a point.)

"Yes, that sounds like Eunice. She was tolerant of people's frailties."

"My point is that, Eunice being the age she was, she was certain to be indifferent to—perhaps I should say understanding about what Johann thought of as perversities. But here's what I'm getting at, Jake: I find Winnie sexually attractive. I also find Alec Train and Judge McCampbell sexually attractive. Startled me. And *you*—which did not startle me. But today was the first time I have been thoroughly kissed by very male men. And I *liked* it. Shook me." (How about dear Doctor?) (None of your lip, sweet lips—we don't tell Jake *that* one.)

JOAN EUNICE went on, "There is my dilemma. Which time am I being homosexual? With Winnie? Or with you three very male bulls?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Joan, you ask the damnedest questions."

"Because I'm in the damnedest situation a man ever found himself in. I'm not the ordinary sex change of a homo who gets surgery and hormone shots to tailor his male body into fake female. I'm not even a mixed-up XXY or an XYY. This body is a normal female XX. But the brain in it has had a man's canalization and many years of enthusiastic male sex experience. So tell me, Jake, which time am I being normal, and which time perverse?"

"Uh . . . I'm forced to say that your female body controls."

"But *does* it? Psychologists claim that sexual desire and orgasm take place in the brain—*not* in the genitals. My *brain* is XY."

"I think you are trying to confuse the witness."

"No, Jake, I'm the one who is confused. But possibly not as confused as the young people today. You know they claim to have six sexes."

"Heard of it. Nonsense."

"Not entirely. I've been doing lots of reading during my de-facto house arrest, trying to find out *who* I am, *what* I am, *how* I should behave. They label these so-called sexes both by behavior and physiology, with a new school of psychology—when wasn't there a new one?—to account for them. The six are ortho-male, ortho-female, ambi-male, ambi-female, homo-male, homo-female—and some list a seventh, the solos or narcissists. Even an eight, the non-sex, the neuters, both physical and psychological."

"And I say it's nonsense."

"I do, too, but not for the same reason. From my unique experience, embracing both physiological sexes directly and not by hearsay, I say there is just *one* sex. Sex. *SEX?* Some people have so little sexual drive that they might as well be neuters no matter whether they are concave or convex. Some people have very strong sexual natures—and again the shape of the body doesn't figure. Such as my former self, horny long after sex had abandoned me. Such as *you*, darling—taking a lovely young married woman less than half your age as your mistress. Such as Eunice—happily married at home, I think—"

"Yes, she was. I felt guilty about it."

"But not too guilty to share her riches. Jake, I wouldn't speak to you if you had scorned her. I was about to name Eunice as my third example of a person strongly sexed. Enough sexual drive in her body—I *know*—for *anything*. Enough love in her heart—I feel certain—for any number. I *know* she loved me, even though she was too warmly empathic to mock me by offering me what I could not accept—and did give me, lavishly, the only thing I could accept—her beauty, for my eyes. Jake, I think Eunice was limited in her love only by time. She kept you happy—"

"She certainly did!"

"I'm just as certain she did so without depriving her husband. Jake, do you have reason to believe that she limited herself to you—and her husband?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Uh— Damn you, Johann! I don't *know*. But I don't think she had *time*. Uh, I used up all the sneak-out time she could manage."

(Look Boss, I'll tell you about every time I struck a blow for equal rights. Don't pester Jake.) (You're missing the point, Eunice. I'm forcing Jake to move Saint Eunice off her pedestal—that's the *only* way we'll ever get him.)

"How do you know? Can you be sure she didn't tell you the same sort of little white lies she told her husband? For that matter, Jake, Joe may have been as proud of his antlers as an old buck deer—the percentage of husbands who are *pleased* by their wives' adulteries has been climbing steadily in this country at least since nineteen-fifty—see any of the kinseys. That he loved her we both are certain. That does not prove he tried to keep her in a cage. Or wanted to."

"Joan, I would just as lief you didn't run down Eunice to me."

"Jake, darling! I am *not* running her down. I am trying to find out what you know about her, so that I can model myself more closely after her. I loved her—and love her still more today. But if you told me that you *knew* she was mistress to six other men, a whore on the side, and playing girl games in her spare time—well, I've never known you to lie to me, Jake, so I would try to go and do likewise. You haven't told me much but what you *have* told me confirms what I believed—that Eunice was a perfect lady, with enough love in her heart to love three men at once and give each of them exactly what he needed to make him happy." (Thank you, Boss. Shall I bow?) (Quiet, little darling.) "But not a wanton, never a slut, and—while she wasn't prudish—I doubt if Winnie would have interested her." (Now wait one frimping minute!) (I'm telling him what he wants to hear, dear—if you want Winnie, we'll keep it out of Jake's sight.) (*Who* wants Winnie? You dirty old man!) (We *both* do—but it may be smart never to let it hatch. Dearest, Winnie wouldn't look at us with a man around.) (Want to bet?)

JOAN sighed. "Jake, with my unique double inheritance it would be easy for me to turn ambi-female. I'm not going to, because I don't think Eunice would. With the deep female drive this body has—bloodstream brimming with hormones and gonads the size of gourds is the way it feels—I could easily become 'No-Pants Smith, the Girl Most Likely To.' Very easily—as Johann Smith was an old vulgarian who regretted only the temptations he had been forced to pass up. But I'm not going to do that, either, as Eunice did not behave that way. But if I don't get married fairly soon, I'm going to find it hard to stay off the tiles."

"Joan, I love you—but I am *not* going to marry you. It's out of the question."

"Then you had better help my granddaughters to swindle me."

"Eh? Why?"

"You know why. A multi-millionaire who is young and female

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stands as much chance of getting a good husband as the well-known tissue-paper dog had of chasing that asbestos cat through Hell. Lots of them in our country—and all they ever got were Georgian princes, riding masters, and other gigolos. I don't want one, won't have one. I'd rather be broke, like Winnie, and take what love I can find. Jake, besides the fact that you understand me and no one else can, you'd still be in my top ten because my money does not impress you. Quite aside from wonderful fact that I love you and you love me, any marriage broker would call us a perfect match."

"Hardly. There's still the matter of age—body ages. Joan, a man who marries at my age isn't taking a wife, he's indenturing a nurse."

"Oh, frog hair, Jake! You don't need one and I'll lay even money that you'll stay strong and virile right through my breeding period. But when you do need one I'll nurse you. In the meantime we'll sing *September Song*—you lead, I'll harmonize."

"I sing bass. And I won't sing *September Song*."

"Jake? We could buy you a new body. When you need it."

"No, Joan. I've had a long run and a good one, most of it happy, all of it interesting. When my time comes, I'll go quietly. I won't make the mistake you did, I won't let myself fall into the hands of the medics, with their artificial kidneys and their dials and their plumbing. I'll die as my ancestors died."

She sighed. "And *you* call *me* stubborn. I've taken you up on a high mountain and shown you the kingdoms of the earth—and you tell me it's Los Angeles. All right, I'll quit pestering you—and humbly accept any love you can spare. Jake, will you take me out on the town and introduce me to eligible young men? You can spot a fortune hunter—I think Eunice may be too naive, too inclined to think the best of people." (Rats, Boss, I bought me a gigolo with my eyes open . . . and, since I wasn't kidding myself, I bought top quality.) (I know you did, darling—but the Joe Brancas in this world are as scarce as the Jake Salomons.)

"Joan Eunice, if you want me to escort you, I'll be honored . . . and I'll try to keep pascoodnyaks away from you."

"I'll hold you to that, you not-so-very-old darling. Jake, I asked if you believed in ghosts. Do you have any religion?"

"Eh? None. My parents were Orthodox, I think you know. My Bar Mitzvah speech was so praised that I had to fight to study law instead of being trained as a rabbi. But I shook off all that before I entered college."

"Parallels me, somewhat. My grandparents came from the south of Germany, Catholic. So the priests had a crack at me first. Then we moved to the middle west before I started school, and Papa, who was never devout, decided it would be better—better for business, maybe—to be a Baptist. So I got the Bible-belt routine, with hell fire and damnation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and my sins washed away with full immersion. It was the Bible-belt indoctrination that stuck, particularly the unconscious attitudes.

"But, consciously and intellectually, I shucked off all of it when I was fourteen—probably the only real intellectual feat of my life. I became an aggressive atheist—except at home—and scorned to believe in anything I could not bite. Then I backed away from that—atheism is as fanatic as any religion and it's not my nature to be fanatic—and became a relaxed agnostic, unsure of final answers but more patient. I stayed that way three-quarters of a century; I left religion to the shamans and ignored it."

"My own policy."

"Yes. But let me tell you something that happened while I was dead."

"What? You were never dead, Joan—Johann, damn it—you were merely unconscious."

"I WASN'T, eh? With no body, and my brain cut off from the world and me not even aware of myself? If that is not death, Jake, it is an unreasonable facsimile. I told you that I thought Eunice's spirit has often given me a hand."

"I heard you. I ignored it."

"You stiff-necked old bastard. I haven't taken up séances and such. But here is what happens. When I am in a quandary—often, these days—I ask myself, 'What would Eunice do?' That's all it takes, Jake; I know at once. No ectoplasm or voices from a medium—just instant knowledge *not* based on my own experience. Such as this afternoon when I decided in a split second to kiss Alec and Mac. No hesitation—you saw! That's *not* the way old Johann would behave . . . and yet you tell me I haven't missed behaving like Eunice even once. That's why it feels as if her sweet spirit were guiding me. Any comment?"

"Mmm . . . No. You do behave like her . . . other than when you tell me flatly that you're speaking as Johann. But I don't believe in ghosts. Johann, if I thought I had to go on being Jake Salomon throughout all eternity, I'd—well, I would register a complaint at the Main Office."

"Let me tell you what happened to *me* at the Main Office."

"Huh?"

"While I was dead, Jake. I was in this—place. There was a very old Man with a long white beard. He had a big book. He looked at me, then consulted His book, then looked back at me. He said, 'Son, you've been a bad boy. But not too bad, so I'm going to give you another chance. Do your best and don't worry; you'll have help.' What do you think, Jake?" (What is this, Boss? Did it happen to *you*, too?) (Eunice, if it happened to you it happened to me; it's the same thing. And *you* are my help, beloved. My guardian angel.) (Oh, frimp you! I'm no angel, I'm *me*.) (A very earthy angel, beloved darling—just what I need.) (Love you, too, you dirty old man.)

Salomon answered slowly, "Anthropomorphism. Right out of your Bible-belt Sunday school."

"Oh, certainly. It had to be in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

symbols I could understand. If I had been a creature from around Proxima Centauri the old Man and the beard might have been a Thing with eight tentacles and faceted eyes. Cliché symbols are nothing against it; I've never thought it was a physical experience. Men live by symbols, Jake. That—symbolic—experience was as real to me as any physical experience. And allow me to point out that I *do* have a second chance and I *have*, and *am* having, lots of help—from you especially, from Mac and Alec, from doctors and nurses . . . and also from something inside that tells me instantly, in any difficult situation, exactly how Eunice would handle it. I don't say it's Eunice . . . but it's *not* Johann; he wouldn't know how. Well?"

Salomon sighed. "Of the inventing of gods there is no end. And almost always anthropomorphic. Joan, if you are going in for that sort of self-delusion, why not go whole hog and join a nunnery?"

"Because Eunice would not. Although she might enjoy revamping a monastery."

Jake chuckled. "She might, at that."

"Maybe I should try it—since you are so damn chinchy about making me an honest woman. More likely I'll change my name again and disappear and wind up in a crib in Bombay. Will you come visit me there, Jake?"

"No. Too hot."

"Chinchy. Mean old Jake. You wouldn't refuse to go see Eunice because of heat."

"Eunice would never wind up in a crib."

"No, she wouldn't. So I have to go on being a lady even though it's quite a strain on old Johann."

"Poor you. All you have is youth, beauty, and half as much money as the I.R.S."

"And *you*, Jake. I could lose the rest and still be rich." (I was wondering if you would see that opening. Sister, you don't need my advice; I think I'll take a vacation.) (You promised to stay!) (Yes, Boss darling. I can't leave; we're Siamese twins. But even if I could, I'd stay because I want to.) (Eunice beloved, I have never been happier in my life.) Joan Eunice moved closer to Jake. "Jake, dear, I have never been happier in my life."

A brassy voice from the cockpit said, "I am about to swing for landing. Please secure seat belts."

Salomon answered, "Seat belts fastened and now being tightened. Proceed with landing." To Joan he said, "Straighten up, Eunice—and do snap up that magno."

Joan Eunice pouted her lip and obeyed.

XV

SECURITY check took little time; Salomon was known to the enclave guards and the copter was expected. It was a short walk from the landing to Salomon's house but, as in all upper-class enclaves, inhabitants in sight outdoors pretended not to see them. The door opened to Jake's voice and again they were private.

Joan Eunice took off her street

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

robe and handed it to Jake, saying, "May I look around? Jake, it's been years since I've been here; you've made changes."

"Some. Moved my personal gear to the Gib or to your house, not much left but furniture which I'll sell with the house. Oh, I keep some clothing and toilet articles here, and I can find us a drink and a tin of biscuits. Perhaps smoked oysters or caviar; we have to kill an hour or two. Or I could send out for dinner."

"Let me see what there is in your kitchen; I would enjoy playing housewife. And I do want to look around."

"Look all you like, but tell me what you want to drink. Joan, have you ever *been* in a kitchen?"

"None of your lip, lad; I'm a good cook. Mama taught me to make Apfelstrudel—dough you could read print through and so light it melted in your mouth—before you were born. Sherry, or a Dubonnet highball—no Schnaps, I'm not risking it yet."

"I'll stack my kosher cooking against your Bavarian messes any day, girl. The Goyim can't cook the way the Chosen People can."

"Oh, pooh, you fake Jew. You haven't tasted my pot roast with noodles. I bached between wives—and cooks—and mistresses, and I always cooked. Jake, wouldn't it be fun to cook for each other and swap recipes? We could do it here. I don't dare enter my own kitchen; Della would faint."

"Might be fun. We can eat my cooking when your boasts don't pan out. Excuse me; I'll see what liquor there is."

Joan Eunice headed straight for the master bedroom. (Eunice, is *this* one of the places?) (Of course. See that sag in the bed? Boss, this is the only place we managed an all-night. Heavenly!) (All night? Then his mobiles do more than suspect; they know.) (Oh, they may suspect but it doesn't matter. Charlie isn't interested in women, and Rockford—well, he's on my team. He approves of anything immoral, illegal, or dishonest—and my conduct was all three, by his standards. He's an atavism. But the all-night—I doubt if they suspected. We used more fan-dancing to keep it out of their sight than Joe's sight—things involving two hired Brink's cars and a non-existent errand for you.) (How did you fan-dance it for Joe?) (Didn't. I thought up a story and told Jake I would use it—then told Joe that I had met a man I wanted to spend a night with . . . did he mind?)

(As simple as that?) (Yes, Boss. We both were free but we were careful never to hurt each other. Only a second-class contract—since I was licensed for children and Joe was not. Either of us could have registered a dissolution on three days' notice.)

(But what did Joe say?) (Nodded and went on painting. He kissed me goodbye and told me to have fun; Joe was always sweet. But he may not have missed me. He was painting from a new model, a beautiful boy who was a frimp type. Joe may have been changing his luck; he sometimes did.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(And *you* didn't mind?)

(That beautiful boy? Boss, you've *got* to move into the twenty-first century, now that you're me. What possible harm? I've told you and told you that Joe and I were *always* careful of each other's happiness; what more could I ask? Besides, I don't know that Joe had his eye on him other than as a model but—well, if they had invited me to move to Troy with them, I wouldn't have minded, for a night or two. I've always preferred older men—but the boy was pretty as a Palomino and clean as a sterilized cup; I wouldn't have found it boring. Plus the fact that a woman is flattered if two males like her enough to let her watch what *they* do.)

(Eunice my love, you continue to startle me. That angle I would never have thought of. Yes, I guess it would be a compliment, in a way. I think that men—even men today—are shyer about such things than women are.)

(Men are horribly shy, Boss—whereas women usually are not. We just pretend to be, when it's expected of us. Look, a woman is a belly with a time bomb inside, and women know it and can never get away from it. They either quit being shy—no matter how they behave to please men—or they go crazy; it's the choice we have to make. And high time *you* made that choice, dear. Accept your femaleness and live with it. Be happy.) (I think I have.) (You're coming along. But sometimes it feels like the bravado of a little boy who says, 'I am not either scared!' when he's ready to wet his pants, he's so frightened.) (Well, maybe. But I've got you holding my hand.) (Yes, dearest. Mama will take care of you.)

Joan went into Jake's bathroom, primarily to snoop. She had just found something she half expected to find—when she heard Jake's voice. "Hey! Where are you? Oh! Coming, or going? Fixed you Chablis over ice."

"That'll do fine. Jake. Was this *hers?*" She held up a luxurious negligee—two ounces of cobweb.

Jake gulped. "Yes. Sorry."

"I'm not sorry." Suddenly Joan stripped off the Cling-Ons, shoved down her frill-skirt panties and stepped out of them, leaving her bare from sandals to eyebrows, put on the negligee. "Do I wear it the way she would? Wups, I wrapped it man-style." She rewrapped the lapover to the left. "Do I do her justice?"

"Eunice! *Eunice!*"

She folded it back, let it slither to the floor, went into his arms, let him sob against her face. "That's enough, darling, Eunice doesn't want you to cry. Eunice wants you to be happy. Both Eunice and Joan Eunice. Hold me tight, Jake. We're lost and lonely—and all we have is each other." While she cuddled him and soothed him, she opened the zip-down of his shirt. (Eunice, I'm scared!) (Easy does it, dear. Chant the Money Hum to yourself; I've taken over. Om Mani Padme Hum.) (Om Mani Padme Hum. Om Mani—)

JOAN was jerked out of it by the telephone signal. She pulled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her mouth from Jake's and started to cry. "Oh, damn!"

Jake said huskily, "Ignore it. It's a mistake, no one knows I'm here."

"Uh— If we don't answer, they'll try again and interrupt us again. I'll take care of it, dear. Where is the pesky thing? Living room?"

"Yes, but there's an extension over there."

"Keep thinking nice thoughts." Joan hurried over, high heels tapping, stood close to the pickup so that only her face would be seen, flipped the switch—said in Eunice's most crisp secretarial voice: "Mr. Salomon's residence. Who is calling?"

The screen stayed blank. "Recorded. Urgent call for Counselor Salomon, third attempt."

"Urgency noted. Proceed. Who is calling?"

Another voice came on, screen still blank. "This is Mr. Salomon's answering service. Judge McCampbell has placed an urgent call. I told the judge that the counselor was more likely to be at his club or at the Johann Smith residence, but he insisted that I keep trying this code, too. Is he there?"

"One moment." Joan glanced back, noted with annoyance that Jake had closed his shirt and picked up her clothes. "I have Mr. Salomon. Can you reach Judge McCampbell? I will hold."

"Thank you. One moment."

Joan stepped still closer and tilted the pickup to make certain that it caught only her face. Jake stepped to her, handed her her clothes. She accepted them, did not put them on.

The screen lighted. "Jake, we— Hey! Brother Schmidt!"

"Alec! How nice!"

"Step back so I can see you, dear. Mac, don't shove," Train added as the judge's face appeared by his in the screen. "Is Jake there?"

"Right beside me, boys."

"All I can see is his shirt. Stand on a box, honey, so that you're both on screen; this must be a four-way conference. Or back away."

"Here he is." Joan tilted the pickup higher, reluctantly pressed the cups to her breasts, stepped into her frill-skirt, wiggled it into place. Then she backed off. "Can you see me now?"

"Not well enough," the judge's resonant baritone answered. "Jake, back off a little. Joan, you need a stool. Better yet, Jake, hold her up in your arms—you lucky man."

"What's the message, gentlemen? And, thank you, Judge, for your flitter. We were delivered quickly and safely."

"De nada, compadre. Jake, my old roomie got a brilliant idea—no doubt through long association with me." The judge explained what each was willing to do in order to speed confirmation of Joan's identity. "This can be our comm center. I am going to live in my chambers a few days—ready to issue a warrant, phone a judge in another jurisdiction or whatever. Then we'll rush it through my court and crowd them into an appeal—get this nailed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down tight. Meanwhile Alec is your man Friday. Want him to go anywhere in a hurry? He's stupid but healthy, and losing a night's sleep to time-zone changes is good for him."

"Probably not before morning. But I'm relieved, gentlemen; I've been wondering how I could be everywhere I need to be. Since I'm retired from everything but Joan's personal affairs, I'm without staff—and I've been cudgeling my brain trying to think whom I could get who would be reliable and competent. As we all know, this is touchy."

"We know!" agreed Alec. "And we're going to fix those harpies—aren't we, Mac?"

"Yes—but legally and so that it cannot be reversed, Jake. You can reach us here—and don't hesitate to wake us if you decide you want Alec to catch a midnight liner. Where will you be? Your house?"

"Until my car arrives, then we'll be at Joan's. Or on our way. My answering service can flip you into my car's wavelength. It's a longish drive."

"We'll be in touch. Don't worry, Jake, and don't let Joan worry. We'll have her baptized before you can say 'missing heir.' "

"I'm not worried," said Joan, "but I feel like crying. Boys—Brothers—how can I thank you?"

"Shall we tell her, Mac? Would she blush? Thank *me*, that is, Brother Schmidt; don't thank Brother Mac; he's just doing his duty, what the taxpayers reluctantly pay him for. But you can thank *me*—I'm a volunteer."

"I'll thank you both, in whatever way you wish," Joan said simply.

"You heard that, Mac? Brother Schmidt committed herself—and you can't break a promise between Brothers, that's the old Bita Pi law. Brother Schmidt Joan Eunice honey, back off and let us see *all* of you. Jake, get out of pickup; you ruin the composition. Go have a beer. Take a nap."

"Ignore him, he's drunk," advised his former roommate.

"So's Mac, we've been working on it. But I'm not too drunk to hop a guided missile, Jake, if you say to."

"Jake," said the judge, "this is getting out of hand. Not that I disagree with this low forehead's enthusiasm. Good night, sir. Good night, Joan. Off."

Joan Eunice flipped the switch, made certain that the screen was dead, started undressing.

"Joan. Stop that."

SHE went on removing her saucy, scanty clothing, heeled off her sandals, then stood facing him. "Jake, I refuse to be treated like a porcelain doll. You had me expecting to be treated as a woman."

He sighed. "I know. But the golden moment passed."

"Well . . . I'm not going to dress. You've seen this body many times, we both know—and I want us both to get easy about it. Actually I'm shy, Jake; I'm only weeks old, as a woman, and not used to it. But I want to get used to it. With you."

"Well— As you wish, dear; you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know how beautiful I think you are. What shall we do? Read aloud to each other till my car arrives? Watch video?"

"Beast. If you were a gentleman you would at least take your clothes off. Instead you are a difficult, stubborn beast and I don't know why I love you. Except that Eunice loved you—*loves* you, wherever she is—so I have to love you. Jake, if you won't take me to bed, at least sit down in that big chair and let me crawl up into your lap. We can talk. We'll talk about Eunice."

He sighed. "Girl, you'll give me a heart attack yet. All right, come curl up in my lap. On one condition."

"Jake, I'm not sure I'll agree to any conditions. I'm in a very unstable state."

"You certainly are, dear. But it's *my* lap. No ticky, no washee."

"I should go back to the courthouse; I don't think Mac and Alec would insist on conditions. Might as well relax, Jake; I'm climbing into your lap with no more yatter. There! That's better. Arms around me, please."

"First the condition. That you not try to rape me in a chair—"

"Don't think I could."

"You'd be surprised what can be done in a chair, Joan."

"Would not, I've done 'em all. As Johann. But they require cooperation."

"Mmm, so they do. —and that, as soon as my car arrives, you dress at once and no nonsense, and we go home."

"All right—since you made that 'we.' I was afraid you were feeling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ornery enough to send me home alone. In which case I was going to have Rockford and Charlie take me straight back to Alec and Mac. Aren't they delightful wolves, Jake? Hold me tight. The only way you can protect me from them is you-know-what."

"Hmm. Joan, can you keep a chuckle to yourself?"

"Well . . . I promise never to tell anyone but Eunice."

"Eh? Okay, I don't think you would break a promise made that way. But, let me add that if you did tell, it would hurt Alec and Mac both—and Eunice would not like that."

"No, Eunice certainly would not like that. Jake, you're going to be able to hogtie me with that phrase the rest of my life." (Don't fret, Boss honey. Any time Jake is wrong, I'll give you the ammo to change his tune.) "All right, I'll tell no one but Eunice—and the old Man with the long white beard next time I see Him."

"Safe enough. Okay, here's the chuckle. Your two charming wolves—and they *are* charming—are as gay as Julius Caesar."

"What? Jake, I have trouble believing that."

"I won't offer proof but I assure you that I know it beyond any reasonable doubt."

"But— Look, dear, I've *kissed* them. I may be an ersatz female . . . but not where it matters, and I *know* those kisses weren't phony. They were hot over me. Shucks, darling, I could tell it by Braille. Besides, they are married."

"I said, 'As gay as Julius Caesar,' not Governor Arkham."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh. Ambi gay, you mean. I still have trouble believing it. Doesn't it show at all? Even in a kiss?" (*I* spotted it, Joan, the potential at least. But they're still wolves . . . and we may be back there some day. To thank them.) (Eunice, is that the only way a female can thank a man?) (That's the only convincing way, twin. This is news?) (No, beloved—but it was possible that your generation had learned something mine had not. They haven't. Not in anything you've told me. Just more open about it.)

"Joan, there is *no* way to spot it, if an ambi does not want it known. Either ambi, or clear over the line and no return. Look, when you were Johann, could you spot a virgin?"

"Jake, I'm not sure I ever met a virgin. But you have."

"You must mean someone we both know."

"Of course."

"Who? Winnie? Wouldn't have thought so. But she does blush easily."

"Not Winnie. If she is one, I didn't have her in mind." (You crawled out of that one!) (Winnie can tell her own secrets. Honey girl? Does Jake know about your baby?) (No, and we're not going to tell him!) (Didn't intend to, darling—just didn't want to be caught foolish.)

"Well, I can't guess. Who is this paragon?"

"Me."

"Uh— But—" Jake Salomon shut up.

"Sure, sure, dear—Johann was not, and Eunice was married. Not to mention an old wolf who tripped her." (*I* tripped *him*.) "But none of that applies to this new female in your lap. I'm a virgin. But would not have been, by now—I think—if that goddam phone hadn't sounded. Don Ameche should never have invented it."

"Who's he? Some Russian? Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone."

"An obsolete joke, Jake—sorry. Ameche played Bell in a movie, oh, about the time you were three or four years old. But let's not talk about long-dead actors, nor my virginity that I can't get rid of; let's discuss Eunice." (My favorite subject!) "That overhead light is in my eyes; where can I squeeze it down? And will you keep your lap warm while I trot and do it?"

"I can do it from here. Is that better?"

"Oh, much! I want to see you, darling—but floor lights are enough. Now tell me about Eunice. I not only want to be like her in other ways . . . but I would like to learn to make love the way she did. As much as you'll tell me."

"Joan, you know I can't tell such things about a lady."

BUT I *am* Eunice, Jake. I just don't have her memory. So I need help. Eunice loved you, and still loves you I feel certain—and Joan Eunice loves you—with a love not at all like the fierce affection Johann always had for his one friend—Joan Eunice loves you with a love that comes also from Eunice's sweet body that I wear so proudly. So tell me about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her. Was she as eager as I am?"

"Uh—" (Slide your hand inside his shirt, twin. Be careful not to tickle.) "Joan, Eunice was eager. I had trouble believing it at first—me an old wreck and she so young and beautiful. But she managed to make me believe it."

"But you are *not* an old wreck, darling. You are in better shape than I was at your age. Oh, your face has character lines; it has a granite majesty that impresses everyone. But your body is as firm and trim as a man half your age. Muscly. And your skin is smooth and elastic, not that distressing crepelike texture I remember too well. Darling . . . even if you divorce me later, will you marry me soon enough to let me have your baby?" (Hon, you're knocking him out of the ring! That's one I never dared use.)

"Eunice! Joan Eunice."

"Oh, I don't mean soon enough for *you*—I mean soon enough for *me*. I may have fifteen more fertile years—but the sooner the better; a woman ought not to have her first baby at past forty. But *you* will be making babies as long as you live. How many children do you have, Jake beloved?"

"Three. You met two of them once. And four grandchildren."

"I don't mean those, I mean others. I'll bet you have at least a dozen more, here and there. You've been rich a long time; you could afford it. How many that you haven't mentioned?"

"Joan Eunice, that's snoopy."

"Yes, and no one has to answer that sort of question. But didn't Eunice ever ask?" (I did and I think he fibbed. I want to hear what he says *this* time.)

"Uh—"

"I won't tell anybody but Eunice. Not even the old Man with the book."

"You insidious little cuddle puppy. I think I have four more. Plus one by a married lady who may have been kidding me. Three I supported until they were on their own; the fourth—and that possible fifth—I couldn't even offer to. But they were never in want."

"How was it handled, dear? Three maiden ladies who moved elsewhere and became overnight widows?"

"Uh . . . only in one case. I offered to marry her—I was a grass widower then—but she elected not to, and did marry later and her husband adopted the child and I made a cash settlement. The other similar case—I was married but the settlement was just as amicable. The other two were married. Some grief about one—she was a compulsive confesser, from which the good Lord deliver me!—and her husband had to be soothed with mucho dinero. The last—well, her husband was sterile—mumps—and together they picked a father. Me. Startled the hell out of me. But he offered to put it in writing and did. I tore it up and settled it with a handshake." (This is *all* news to me, Joan. But I couldn't believe that such a virile and charming man had left no by-blows. Keep him talking.)

Jake grinned and caressed her sweet body. "That is the only one I'm certain about, as I have never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

insisted on blood tests if a lady accused me and I *could* have been the man. But in that case I am certain, as we took a holiday together, by sailboat, with her husband as nominal chaperone. So that time it was I, at the right time and place. Then—" He paused. "Joan Eunice, I don't know whether Johann would have approved of the sequel, or not . . . but I don't want to shock the sweet girl you are now." (Honey, don't let him stop *there*!)

"Johann can't be shocked, Jake. If it's rough, I won't tell Eunice. But don't let me crowd you."

"Well . . . it wasn't rough, it was sweet. They didn't use me and drop me. I was welcome in their home thereafter . . . and in their bed."

"Three in a bed?"

"Uh . . . don't be nosy! Sometimes."

"But no more babies?"

"They were licensed for four and had them. But I think they picked a different father for each. I simply know that, in the several times I stayed in their home over about ten years, I never slept alone. I still get Christmas cards from them, each with a photograph of the family—and my daughter looks like her mother, not like me, thanks be to God. Joan, they were and are a respectable married couple, devout, and devoted to each other and to their children, and old-fashioned . . . except that, when they were faced with the need for a donor, they elected to pick donors themselves, then use the old-fashioned way rather than syringes and a clinic."

"Uh . . . was she sweet in bed?"

"Quite. But unsophisticated. Not a patch on Eunice, if you were thinking about her."

"I was." (*I* was!)

"Eunice— Eunice was the most glorious thing that could happen to any man. Sweet as an angel, and as skilled—and as uninhibited —as the most famous courtesan in history." (I'm *purring*!)

"Jake. I prefer the old-fashioned way, too."

"Yes?"

"You were sweet to all those ladies and you got two unmarried ones pregnant and I'm rich enough to get away with it and right now you are feeling young—I *know* you are! Will you pick me up and carry me over there? Or shall I walk?"

"Eunice."

"Let's both walk. But hurry."

"Yes. Yes, darling."

SHE jumped up, took his hand . . . as the house intercom sounded with: "Mr. Salomon! Rockford here. Your car is waiting."

Joan said, "Oh, my God!" and started to cry.

Jake put his arm around her and petted her. "I'm sorry, darling."

"Jake. Tell them to go get dinner. Tell them to be back in, uh, two hours."

"No, dear."

She stomped her bare foot. "Jake, I won't, I won't! This is unbearable."

He said quietly, "You promised. Look, darling, I'm not nineteen years old and able to perform in back seats of cars or on back

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

porches with a party going on in the house. I have to have quiet and peace." (Don't believe him, dear! Though he might be scared off for a first time.)

Joan bawled and shook her head. He spoke loudly: "Rockford!"

"Yes, sir?"

"We'll be out in a moment or two. Keep the reactor warm."

He stepped to the wall and squeezed down the intercom to zero, then said gently, "Get dressed dear."

"I won't! If we leave now, you'll have to stuff me into the car bare naked."

He sighed and picked her up; she stopped crying and looked suddenly happy.

The expression did not last. He turned her in his arms as he sat down on a straight chair, got a firm grip on her, and walloped her right buttock. She yelped. And struggled.

He got her more firmly, placing his right leg over both of hers, and applied his hand smartly to her left cheek. Then he alternated sides, stopping with ten. He set her on her feet and said, "Get dressed, dear. Quickly."

She stopped rubbing the punished area. "Yes, Jake."

Neither said another word until he had handed her into the car, climbed in after her, and they had been locked in. Then she said timidly, "Jake? Will you hold me?"

"Certainly, darling."

"May I take my robe off, please? Will you take it off me?"

With the robe out of the way she sighed and snuggled in. After a bit she whispered, "Jake darling? Why did you spank me?"

It was his turn to sigh. "You were being difficult . . . and it is the only thing I know of which will do a woman any good when a man can't do for her what she needs. And right then—I couldn't."

"I see. I think I do."

She remained quiet a while, enjoying his arms around her and breathing against his chest. Then she said, "Dear? Did you ever spank Eunice?"

"Once."

"For the same reason?"

"Not quite. Well, somewhat. She teased me into it." (I tickled him, dear. And got the surprise of my life.)

"Then I'm glad you spanked me, too. But I'll try not to tease you—though I'll never be the angel she was." (Fallen angel, Boss. And enjoyed it all, clear down to the Pit.)

"Jake?"

"Yes, Eunice?"

"I didn't really mind being spanked by you. Even when I was crying. But— Well, I'm padded now—built to take a spanking. And when you are spanking me, you aren't ignoring me—and any attention is better than none. And besides—" She hesitated.

"Besides what, Eunice?"

"Well, I don't know—but I think it happened."

"What happened?"

"Female orgasm. Well, maybe. I don't know what one is supposed to feel like. But while I was crying—and hurting; you have a heavy hand, sir—suddenly I felt very warm inside and something

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed to grow and explode—that's the best I can describe it. And I was ecstatically happy and didn't mind the last few wallops, hardly noticed them. Was that a female orgasm?"

"How would *I* know, dearest? Perhaps you'll be able to tell *me*. Later."

"Later tonight?"

"Uh, I think not, Eunice. It's late and we have had nothing to eat and I'm tired even if you aren't—"

"I am, rather. But happy."

"So tonight we'll rest. When it does happen—and I'm no longer fighting it—let's make the first time absolutely private and quiet. No phones and no servants and no distractions. After that—well, it might be target-of-opportunity. But I'm not a kid. You know what I mean, darling; you've been old, too."

"Yes, dearest, *much* older than you are. Eunice can wait. Jake? What was this teasing Eunice did that was so bad it got her spanked?"

He suddenly grinned. "The little imp tickled me until I nearly went out of my mind. So I spanked her. But we were alone, and that ended satisfactorily. Quite."

"How?"

"How do you think? I excelled my usual mediocre performance, and Eunice—there aren't words for it, but she excelled her utter perfection, impossible as that sounds." (He darn near split me like a melon, twin—and I *wanted* him to!)

"So? Someday *I* will tickle you—and get spanked for it. So take your vitamins, dear. Jake, you *enjoyed* spanking me. Didn't you?"

He was silent several moments. "I enjoyed it so much that I spanked you neither as hard nor as long as I wanted to. And started feeling 'young' as you put it—but knew that, if I didn't get you out of the house right then, you probably wouldn't leave at all. And I don't care to advertise it to servants."

"You had better marry me. So we can ignore servants."

"You had better shut up. You're still learning to be a girl, and I'm still learning how to handle you. You're Eunice—but you aren't Eunice. And we must clear up legal matters before we talk about such things."

"Old mean. Girl beater. Sadist. Hold me *tight*."

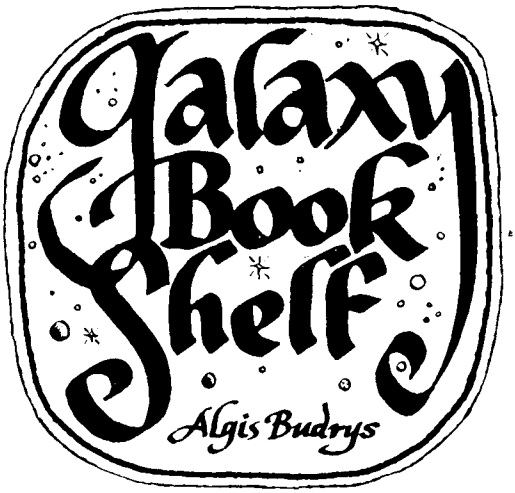
(TO BE CONTINUED)

SUBSCRIBE NOW TO THE NEW

IF

The Magazine of Alternatives

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



BEING in this corner, I often think about what sells books. And I think pretty definitely that the crucial encounter occurs when a casual reader, coming upon a piece of literature in the marketplace, finds his money solicited by the publisher on the basis of certain flattering claims about the product. These claims appear right on the piece of product, and have the jargon designation of "blurbs."

Well, as some of you already know I'm not crazy about the style of most blurbs. Some of you—particularly some of you who write blurbs—have expressed frustration and ire. Don't I understand you're just trying to sell more books, and thus do good for the whole field? Etc.

Okay. Perhaps you have missed the point, chums, and perhaps we will go through it again. Tones up the blood, anyhow.

I think the blurb attempts to divert some of the prospective reader's funds away from his grocery budget in exchange for what may be a very specious promise of entertainment. The prospect is conscious that he worked for his money and he feels he earned it fairly. He applies these same standards to the things that try to earn from him. I therefore think it wise that the blurb should honestly inform the prospect about the book—that is to say the product.

It may do so quite legitimately by talking even not so much about the book as about the train of thought or the social format that produced it. It may do so quite legitimately simply by reminding the reader that the author of this one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has produced a listed number of previous books that the reader bought and enjoyed, and by reassuring the reader that this one is just like them. Honesty need not be carried to absurd extremes. The reader, after all, is a reasonably well-read citizen of the world.

But often enough what the actual blurb does—when it isn't full of outright lies or the rediscovery of some banal profundity—is to be full of personal notes which upon examination boil down to "Gee whiz, we the editors of this book really enjoy being friends with the writer. He's a fantastic luncheon raconteur and you ought to see him with a lampshade on his head at parties." Or they boil down to "Buy this book from my friend."

Now you can hardly blame the intelligent reader for feeling that he has happened in on a gang prank in which he has no hope of actually participating. I think this is what happens all too often: I think it's very bad for science fiction; I think it's in extremely questionable taste. Ultimately I don't think it sells very many people on continuing to buy books, even when sometimes the disservice is merely a pitiful one, like serving wine in a greasy glass.

LET us have at *14 Great Tales Of ESP* (Fawcett Gold Medal Book #T2164, 75c) edited by Idella Purnell Stone, with an introduction by John W. Campbell.

All right, now the thing to do is to decide whether anyone, starting with the prospective reader, is going to get any benefit out of this book. It's useless to stand around supposing about what odd combination of events led the publisher to accept an anthology from someone without any credentials to qualify them for selecting greatness. If I had known how to do it I would have done it. So let's imagine now our reader or our prospect coming up to this article on the newsstand and working on a decision whether or not to buy it.

The table of contents sports a number of names which are or should be rather recognizable. The back of the book says: "These amazing tales by the great masters of science fiction . . ."

Well, that's not a lot of help. Fawcett has the most overblown blurbs in the business, apparently as the result of an editorial belief that the publisher will not okay the purchase of any given manuscript unless it is at least by a great master. If you have been haunting newsstands and buying Gold Medal books for any length of time you might know this.

Caveat emptor and let us look at these great masters. These great masters are Randall Garrett, Murray Leinster, Fredric Brown, Walter Bupp, Isaac Asimov, Mack Reynolds, Reginald Bretnor, Jay Williams, Zenna Henderson, James H. Schmitz, Robert F.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Young, and Eric Frank Russell (represented by an article).

So we have one, two, three, four people who can be counted on to be named on any list of reliable modern sf writers. We have several others of high minor-league status and we have the usual number of spear carriers. So much for that. What next? Well, we have the editor's introductory blurbs for the various stories herein—for instance "The Foreign Hand Tie" by Randall Garrett: " . . . This story . . . is in the realm of possibility—since it is possible and even logical that a fully developed telepath might be employed for espionage."

I don't know about you, but that kind of thing worries me. First of all, I cannot imagine what else you can be but a spy by definition, equipped with such a talent. Spying on political partisans of other ideologies is only the merest tentative first extension of the notion of being able to spy on the thoughts of the lady next door, so I don't really understand what the excitement is about.

But neither am I ready to admit to the believability of any blurb which began with "In light of the fully authenticated cases of complete telepathic communication between twins . . ."

I don't feel that there are any fully authenticated cases of any kind of useful telepathic communication between twins. I am even more inclined to be positive that there are no fully authenticated cases of *complete* telepathic communications between twins, and I think that I am not alone in that opinion. I think most people don't know of any such thing, although a number of people may believe or wish to believe that it is true, and I think it's incumbent on an editor addressing herself to any kind of conventional audience to back up that kind of offhand remark with a few ready references.

So right away I don't think this is a book for those people who read science fiction because they find it presents a valid challenge to the imagination. Then we get to the blurb for Robert Heinlein's "Project Nightmare." This goes: ". . . His imagination can be as unlimited as the universe and the far future, or confined, as in this story, to the taut boundaries of a here-and-now crisis."

Well, anybody who confuses an abstract like imagination with a concrete like the physical universe has got a perceptual problem basically describable as a lack of imagination. The size of the scene on which a creator may choose to cast his narrative is in no relevant way related to the reach of his mind. Most of the people who read science fiction are perfectly capable of perceiving distinctions of that order, and do so as a matter of course. That quality goes along with a great range of similar perceptions without which, it seems to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me, one cannot be a science-fiction reader. I may be wrong, but in my little role here as the guy who might buy this book, I am the guy who has just decided not to.

Now, that's my loss. I don't want you to think I was being nasty to Mrs. Stone just for the sake of being nasty. The stories in this book are by and large good ones. They're fun to read. Some of them represent some pretty impressive achievement on the part of people who spun them out. Their compilation represents an achievement on Mrs. Stone's part—you don't put together a list like this without working at it. Yet, it seems to me what has happened here is that publisher and editor have unwittingly acted together in such a way as to discourage a major portion of the potential audience for this book.

LET'S have a look at *Infinity One*, New Writings in Speculative Fiction, edited by Robert Hoskins (Lancer book #75-108, 75¢). What we have here is a rather attractive-looking package. The cover promises an "introduction by Isaac Asimov," then "a short novel by Poul Anderson," and then states the book is "featuring Arthur C. Clarke" and, immediately under that, uses the term: "never before published." O.K., the reader is being invited to buy yet another "magazine in book form," to borrow a term directly from the contents page of this particular one, and now the question is, should he?

Well, Arthur Clarke is a potent name. So is Asimov, but the Asimov is a reprint and not an introduction for this book at all. It's a reprint of an Asimov article which originally appeared in a house magazine, for Local 1 of the Amalgamated Lithographers of America, in 1967. It's an article called *The Fun In Future Fun*, and nowhere in it is there any reference to the contents of this book or to any of the writers in this book. It just happens to be an Asimov article which Hoskins has picked up and chosen to call an introduction.

The Clarke is not a new story. It's *The Star* from 1955, where it graced the first issue of *Infinity* Magazine. It subsequently won a Hugo and went on to a number of anthology appearances. It has inded enjoyed a distinguished career over the fifteen years that have intervened between its first publication and its appearance in a product with "never before published" engraved upon its cover directly under this story's author's name.

Hoskins is as familiar with science fiction as anyone could want him to be. He's a long-time fan, and a knowledgeable person in many ways. He says in his introduction to *The Star*:

"It is not our intention to present reprints in this series, but *In-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

finity One is the lineal descendant of *Infinity Science Fiction* of fond memory. And leading off the first issue of that first *Infinity* was a story destined to become an immediate classic. Thus it's a pleasure to break our own rules for the first and only time and present once more . . ."

That's a pretty clumsy piece of weasel wording. But if you can unblushingly link "immediate" with "classic," then you have no problems at all in declaring that you are establishing a rule by breaking it.

But it leaves a funny taste in the mouth and meanwhile we, still trying to make up our mind whether this book is any good or not, now begin paging through it in dead earnest.

The table of contents looks good: it's got a Silverberg, a Katherine Maclean, an Anne McCaffrey, a Ron Goulart, a Gene Wolfe, a collaboration by Kris Neville and K.M. O'Donnell. It does have a Poul Anderson novelet and it has stories in addition by Miriam Allen deFord, R.A. Lafferty, Dean R. Koontz, Edward Wellen and a couple of new names like Pat De Graw and George Zebrowski. It has something called *3 Fables*—which turn out to be two sophomoric short stories by Stephen Barr and Michael Fayette, respectively, and a funny one by Gordon R. Dickson, none of whom are masters of this form in a field which has only one Fredric Brown and a jam of editors who think that a short-short story is anything that's shorter than a short story.

But I was digressing. Well, as I keep trying to establish with some of the people who object to my doing so, I accept in front that since you cannot sell a book on the basis of what's actually in it—because the store proprietor won't let the prospect read the whole package before he walks out with it—then it does make sense to use blurbs and to package the product.

But then—*then* God damn it!—you are doing nobody any good by being dumb in your blurbs.

Hoskins, as we can see, has already established himself as a shifty character, thus making one wonder whether his book is any good. Now we have to cope with his version of the English language: "Happily for we as readers he is a man yet young enough that we can look forward to many years of producing stories such as . . ."

I have to admit to you that that's the most outrageous example I could find. I don't think its necessary to find very many of that caliber. One will do to cast serious doubts on the editor's credentials as a man who presumably judged the contents of this book. He's either a man in a hell of a hurry or a man whom all the time in the world wouldn't help.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If you want to know more about that, try the introduction to the Katherine MacLean story. I give it to you in its entirety: "We live in a big universe; Katherine MacLean, who writes far too little these days, examines one small corner of it now . . . "

Gentle reader, I hardly know how to convey the depth of my personal reaction to what might be called the absurdly profound school of nonsequitur blurb writing. But it's an article of some faith with me that you will convey your reaction at this point by putting the book down in its rack and walking away from it quickly.

How about this one: "At this time nothing is known of the author of the following story: even his/her sex is a matter of speculation. Whether man or woman, it is certain that Pat De Graw is talented, and to be hoped that there'll be many more such stories to come . . . "

What follows this is, like most of the stories in this book, at least good—and that's my point, it's at least good, but if the editor of this thing could not take the trouble to discover to whom he was addressing his check for what may have been a first sale, and whose life it was that he was altering, why, pray tell, should we as readers feel that we are here in contact with any exercise of conscience, discretion, judgement, respect for one's own job and one's own profession, and in the end any respect for oneself? There are so many sources vying for our entertainment money that it becomes extremely difficult to perceive why anyone should feel moved to purchase this particular entertainment.

The generally high quality of the stories within this book is irrelevant and is in fact largely wasted. The work of the writers contained herein is in some danger of going down the drain, their earnings are in positive danger of being impaired, the publisher's earnings will not be as high as they might have been, the editor's salary probably should be cut, and who gains? Who gains? ★

In the next issue, GALAXY will bring you

THE WORLD OUTSIDE

Robert Silverberg

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SPECIAL TO GALAXY & IF READERS...
THE BEST IN
SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS...

worth adding to your library... stories you will treasure...
available to you at a special 10% discount

Conveniently obtained from GALAXY Magazine. No searching, no book clubs, no commitments. Here are the books of enduring value that you will want to own... for hours of science-fiction pleasure, to be read, reread, and discussed with your friends. These are the books that have proven themselves... filled with all of the features you look for in S-F... written by the acknowledged masters of the art. Just circle your choices below, mail to us, and the books will be in your hands shortly, ready to transport you to new, thrilling, imaginative worlds.

FREE—with every order for 2 or more books...

AWARD SCIENCE FICTION READER. 188 pages, containing stories by such masters of science fiction as Arthur C. Clarke, Theodore Sturgeon, A. E. van Vogt, Clifford Simak, Poul Anderson, Leigh Brackett, John W. Campbell, Jr. All of the stories belong to the excitingly modern era that swept SF to its greatest pinnacle of popularity.

S-1

NONE BUT MAN by Gordon R. Dickson. Aliens from Moldaug, inhuman stars from the last human settlement, are gathering together for war. Old world inhabitants are willing to sacrifice the new world colonies in order to avert this war. But not rugged individualist Cully When, the type of man who has pioneered frontiers in all times and all places. Set in some future time, this action-filled adventure depicts space-age guerrilla warfare and age-old human stupidity with excitement and ends with an explosive climax.

253 pp. List Price...$4.95 Discount Price...$4.46

S-2

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE by James Blish. Two separate and complete worlds—idyllic Lithia and a culture on Earth that has literally gone under ground, provides the basis for the story of four extraordinary men. There is the priest, dedicated to the glory of God; the scientist working for the glory of man; the realist who works only for himself; and the man who is content to ask nothing of any world, any man, or any deity. The author presents a compelling moral problem. This book is something of a *tour de force.*

188 pp. List Price...$4.50 Discount Price...$4.05

S-3

BUG JACK BARRON by Norman Spinrad. Explore the edge of tomorrow... who will be chosen for immortality? Who will make this ultimate decision —the government, free enterprise, or private monopoly? A new, highly controversial novel, infused with blood and guts, examining the disease of power as well as the responsibility. Both praised and damned before it was even published, this novel deserves your personal attention.

327 pp. List Price...$5.95 Discount Price...$5.36

S-4A

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN by John Boyd. From the Planet of the Flowers, Dr. Freda Caron's fiancé Paul has sent her an exquisite iridescent yellow tulip that not only has a plastic memory—but can talk. Freda realizes that she must unlock the secrets of the flower planet and its strange hold on Paul. In this exciting new book, Freda must travel from her ultra-rational world-of-tomorrow to explore the strange, unearthly flower planet. The climax of this shocking and oddly beautiful novel is bizarre and delightful.

212 pp. List Price...$5.50 Discount Price...$4.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

S-5

THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS by John Wyndham. For an entire day, a small rural village in England loses contact with the outside world. Soon after, all the women, married or not become pregnant, eventually giving birth to remarkable golden-eyed children who exhibit a strange kind of sinisterism. They are dangerous and Midwich must make the ultimate decision—if the children survive, then mankind must join the dinosaur among Nature's discards. A gripping account of man's fight for survival.

189 pp. List Price...$4.50 Discount Price...$4.05

S-6

THE SPACE MERCHANTS by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth. Two major advertising agencies are fighting for the Venus account—nothing less than total control of the Venus economy and markets will do. It is completely unimportant that Venus is a harsh, barren, uninhabited planet. According to the mentality of Mitchell Courtenay of Fowler Schocken Associates, the trick is to persuade colonists to go to Venus, and once there, they will have to survive as best they can. One of the most savage and devastating attacks on modern consumer society and the advertising agents who are its high priests, *The Space Merchants* is uncomfortably prophetic.

158 pp. List Price...$4.50 Discount Price...$4.05

S-7

BRAIN WAVE by Poul Anderson. Imagine, some mysterious space force that inhibits the world's intelligence. But suddenly, it's gone and overnight the intellect of every living creature is trebled. What are the consequences of such instant genius? These are the problems confronting Archie Brock, former near moron; Peter Corinth, physicist; and his no-longer dumb wife. This provocative and absorbing book explores the ultimate problem of such a situation—in a world free of the difficulties that has plagued mankind throughout history, what is man to do with his time?

164 pp. List Price...$4.50 Discount Price...$4.05

S-8A

OPUS 100 by Isaac Asimov. An event—a special Asimov book...America's foremost science writer, takes you on a personalized guided tour of his first 99 books. This, his 100th book, is an anthology of works selected by the author himself. It is a journey which acquaints the reader with a writer considered to be a genius, who delights in every aspect of life and has the capacity to make any subject he writes about both understandable and entertaining. Reviewers customarily greet Asimov publications with such adjectives as "brilliant," "engrossing," "powerful," and "sparkling." *Opus 100* is no exception.

318 pp. List Price...$5.95 Discount Price...$5.36

S-9

THE PAST THROUGH TOMORROW, Robert A. Heinlein's Future History Stories. Twenty-five years ago Robert A. Heinlein began to write stories about an imaginary future that is fast becoming a reality. Discover, through the pen of the master of space-age fiction, about man's first step on the moon; weather control; manufacture of synthetic food; interstellar exploration. Now, for the first time, in chronological order, are Heinlein's 21 compelling stories—all depicting a glimpse of a possible tomorrow.

667 pp. List Price...$6.95 Discount Price...$6.26

S-10

THORNS by Robert Silverberg. Duncan Chalk, master pain peddler, skillful and sophisticated, lives in a time when reading tragic headlines no longer provides the necessary sensations. Into Chalk's sinister hands falls Lona Kelvin, orphaned, mother of 100 children, yet without a soul; and Minner Burris, starman, whose butchered body was put together by aliens, a walking horror. What fun to mate these two and watch them wallow in their mutual torment. But somewhere, something went wrong. Discover what happens when the puppets begin to pull their own strings in this imaginative, chilling book.

222 pp. List Price...$4.95 Discount Price...$4.46

THE GALAXY BOOK SERVICE

P.O. Box 3977, Grand Central Post Office, New York, N.Y. 10017

Please send me the books I have circled.

S-1 S-2 S-3 S-4A S-5

S-6 S-7 S-8A S-9 S-10

Please print full name & address

Name

Address

City State Zip Code

Sorry, No C.O.D.'s. (Please add 25¢ for postage and handling. N.Y.C. residents please add 6% sales tax. N.Y. State residents please add 5% sales tax.)

10-day satisfaction . . . or your money back. FREE copy of AWARD SCIENCE FICTION READER with all orders for 2 or more books.

G-8-70

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THIS SPACE CONTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLISHER AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

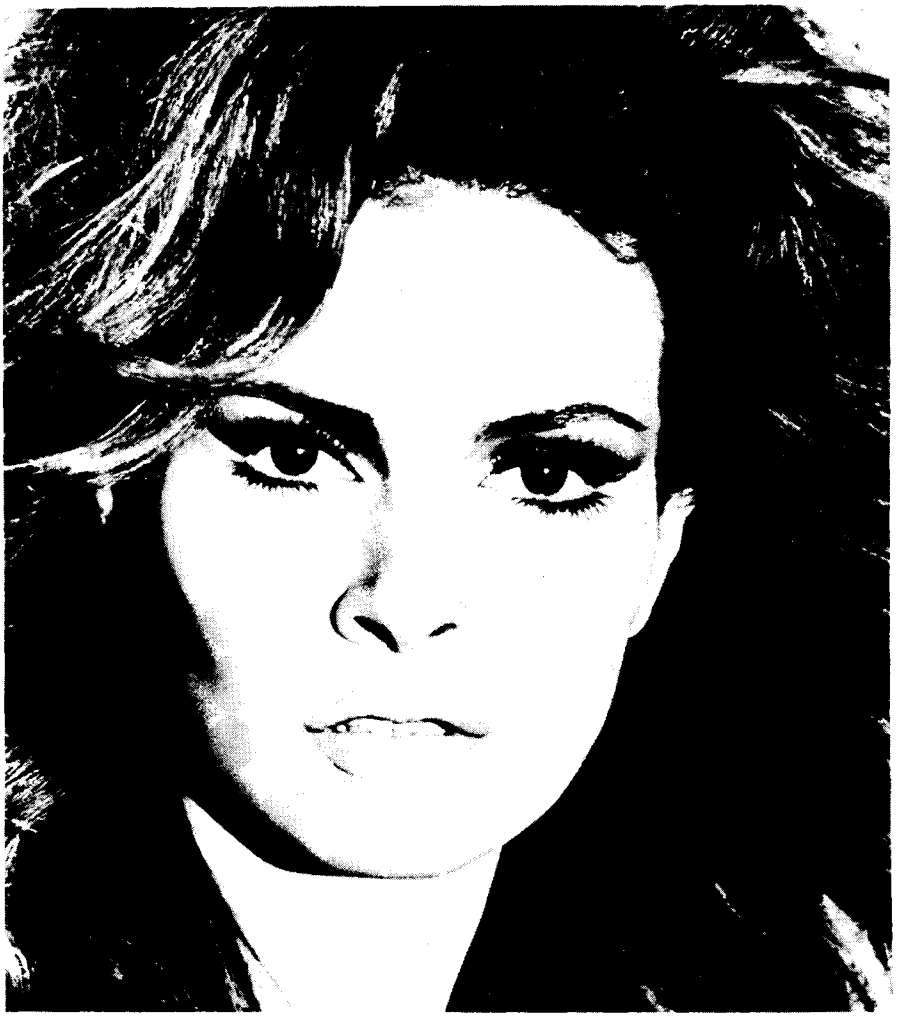


Photo by Terry O'Neill

Miss Raquel Welch

Learn the seven warning signals of cancer. You'll be in good company.

1. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
2. A lump or thickening in the breast or elsewhere.
3. A sore that does not heal.
4. Change in bowel or bladder habits.
5. Hoarseness or cough.
6. Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing.
7. Change in size or color of a wart or mole.

If a signal lasts longer than two weeks, see your doctor without delay.

And be sure to have a health checkup once a year, no matter how well you may feel.

Fight Cancer with a checkup and a check

American Cancer Society

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Science Fiction Book Club invites you to take

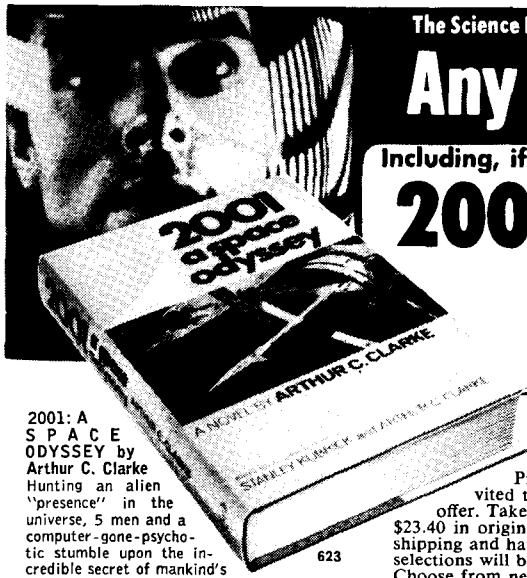
Any 3 books for only $1

with trial membership

Including, if you wish,

2001: A Space Odyssey

best-selling novel and award-winning cinema spectacular



623

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY by Arthur C. Clarke
Hunting an alien "presence" in the universe, 5 men and a computer-gone-psychotic stumble upon the incredible secret of mankind's birth — only to trigger the cosmic "booby-trap" that could spell its death. A controversial best-seller by the most acclaimed science fiction writer of our era. Pub. ed. **$4.95**

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MGM FROM THE FILM 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, A STANLEY KUBRICK PRODUCTION.

Science Fiction has grown up. *Have you kept up?*

A new literary genre has come of age—your age. Mature. Sophisticated. Provocative. *And respected.* You are invited to explore it now under an amazing trial offer. Take any 3 volumes on this page (worth up to $23.40 in original publishers' editions) for only $1, plus shipping and handling with trial membership. ▪ New club selections will be described to you in advance each month. Choose from new works of fiction—and fact—by such acclaimed authors as Bradbury, Serling, Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein and others. Volumes are full-length, hard-bound —and uncut. Though they sell for as much as $4.95, $5.95 and more in their original publishers' editions, club members pay only $1.49 plus shipping. (You may choose an *optional extra-value selection* at a slightly higher price.) Your sole obligation is to accept as few as four books during the coming year. Cancel any time thereafter. Science Fiction Book Club, Garden City, N.Y. 11530.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB
Dept. 08-GXX, Garden City, N.Y. 11530

Please accept my application for membership and rush the 3 books whose numbers I have printed below. Bill me $1.00 plus a modest shipping and handling charge for all three. Each month send me the Club's free bulletin, **Things to Come,** which describes coming selections. If I do not wish to receive the monthly selection or prefer an alternate, I simply give instructions on the form provided. For each book I accept, I pay $1.49, plus shipping and handling. Occasional extra-value selections are priced slightly higher. I need take only 4 books in the coming year and may resign any time thereafter.

NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted with my introductory package, I may return it in 10 days and membership will be canceled. I will owe nothing.

[ ] [ ] [ ]

Print
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

If under 18, parent must sign here _____

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. 22-S79

606. The Beast That Shouted Love at the Heart of the World, by Harlan Ellison. 15 tales—including Hugo & Nebula Award Winners.

642. Stand on Zanzibar, by John Brunner. Extrapolates today's society into 21st Century. 600 pages. Pub. ed. **$6.95**

279. Science Fiction Hall of Fame, I. 26 "winners," chosen by Sci-Fi Writers of America. Ed. Robert Silverberg. Pub. ed. **$7.95**

637. The Left Hand of Darkness, by Ursula K. LeGuin. Finding love—in a "Unisex" world! Nebula Award winner. Pub. ed. **$4.95**

615. Stranger in a Strange Land, by Robert A. Heinlein. He knew the Martian love secret —and it spelled his doom. Pub. ed. **$6.95**

633. Satan's World, by Poul Anderson. Civilization built on "vice culture" threatened by revolution. Pub. ed. **$4.95**

622. The Foundation Trilogy, by Isaac Asimov. The ends of the galaxy revert to barbarism. Pub. ed. **$10.50**

625. World's Best Science Fiction 1969. By Vonnegut, Jr., Sheckley, Delaney, Knight, Aldiss, and others.

619. I Sing the Body Electric! by Ray Bradbury. 18 new pieces—Bradbury's first collection in five years. Pub. ed. **$6.95**

618. Dangerous Visions. Anthology of 33 original stories never before in print by Sturgeon, Anderson, others. Pub. ed. **$6.95**

621. Three for Tomorrow. Novellas by Silverberg, Zelazny, Blish. Foreword by Arthur C. Clarke. Pub. ed. **$5.95**

629. The Illustrated Man. Ray Bradbury. 19 stories. "Intensely real." *N. Y. Times.* Now a hit movie! Pub. ed. **$4.50**

Printed in U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED